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**Greater Victoria municipal bargaining:
Strong strike votes warn employers to get serious about bargaining**

VICTORIA – CUPE members in four Greater Victoria municipalities, in West Shore Parks and Recreation, and in the Capital Regional District have come out in force to give strong strike mandates to their union’s negotiating committees in an attempt to end a serious stall in bargaining and conclude fair collective agreements.

CUPE representatives say that after six months of negotiations it is time to resolve key issues on bargaining tables, including problems retaining qualified workers in a competitive labour environment.

“We are sending a strong message to our employers and to the Greater Victoria Labour Relations Association (GVLRA) – which bargains on behalf of these and other municipal employers – that it’s time to get serious about reaching agreements. We have over 1,700 members who have now voted to take strike action if necessary,” says Tammy Simonds, CUPE National representative.

Strike votes took place between July 4 and July 6. CUPE 374 members in Metchosin voted 100 per cent in favour of strike action; in North Saanich the vote was 92 per cent; in Oak Bay 82 per cent voted in favour of strike action; and in Sidney, the vote was 97 per cent. CUPE 1978 members at the Capital Regional District voted 93 per cent in favour of strike action and members at West Shore Parks and Recreation voted 100 per cent in favour.

“Since January we have had steady talks and an exchange of views with all of the employers represented by the GVLRA. We have serious issues on the table – including raising wages so that they are on par with other employers in Greater Victoria and fairness for auxiliary workers. But suddenly we are getting stonewalled. We believe that we can get fair agreements, but we need to see employers bargaining,” says Trevor Davies, CUPE 374 bargaining spokesperson.

Mauricio Navarrete, president of CUPE 1978, says that key issues for members working for the Capital Regional District are achieving a flexible workweek, developing a respectful workplace, and achieving protection against contracting out and privatization. “And at West Shore Parks and Recreation, CUPE 1978 members are looking for better treatment of auxiliary workers and shift workers,” says Navarrete.

Other CUPE locals in the region are also engaged in bargaining with the GVLRA, but have not taken strike votes. These include CUPE 50 in the City of Victoria and the Victoria Police Board, CUPE 333 in Esquimalt, CUPE 374 in Colwood, and CUPE 410 at the Greater Victoria Public Library.

Backgrounders available at: www.cupebargains.ca

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