

# THE PROFESSIONAL

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BC's Union for Professionals

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From the global pandemic to extreme wildfires across the province, we have been through difficult times these past months, marked by continual upsets to our sense of personal and social equilibrium.

For me, the experience has challenged my personal and professional resiliency, and I question whether or not resiliency is truly the goal. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines resiliency as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. It means a certain type of toughness.

The last two years have certainly changed me and left me grappling with numerous questions, the answers to which remain unclear:

- Are we to remain resistant to change, or do these experiences fundamentally shift us to a new state? Have we changed?
- Are we tough, or have these experiences softened us?
- Is it important to bounce back as soon as possible, or can we take time to understand how these difficulties have impacted us?
- Is it more important to return to the status quo, or can we allow ourselves time to explore the differences in our perspectives and how to integrate them into our new normal?
- Are we meant to be in a steady state, or is it okay to oscillate from one state to another based on our personal experience?

From where I sit now, I expect it will be some time before we sort through the

many ways our lives have been changed by the pandemic, and that these reflections will be different for each of us. I am interested in hearing your perspectives and thoughts on these questions.

Change is all around us. Many of us are set to return to office spaces, but with the new task of navigating both the old and new realities. As you work through these changes, I wish you a deep breath of fresh air and a beautiful autumn.

Update on union activities:

- Member support remains our biggest priority. Please reach out if you need assistance.
- Bargaining is complete for the Hospital Employees' Staff Union (HESU) chapter, with preparations in progress for our government licenced professionals (GLP) and Law Society lawyers (LSL) chapters. A collective agreement extension was offered to St. Margaret's School (SMS) and ratified in April.
- A total of 19 education sessions were offered to members since November 2020, on a range of topics. The feedback was very positive, with an average of 90 per cent of surveyed members stating that they agreed or strongly agreed that the topics were relevant.
- Thank you to the close to one thousand members who shared their feedback through our annual member survey. The results will be available later this fall.
- We continue to address chapter recruitment and retention concerns,

including advocating for wage parity for lawyers in FMA and LABC.

- The GLP chapter partnered with Evidence for Democracy to offer education to members on the importance of scientific integrity in British Columbia.

At the time of print, our HESU members had reached an agreement after several months of negotiations and 17 days at the bargaining table. They held a one-day strike in Burnaby on September 3.

All the best,

Shawna



ABOVE AND BELOW: HESU members on strike in Burnaby, September 3.



## THE PROFESSIONAL

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# A NEW MODEL OF CARE

## PEA PHYSIOTHERAPISTS ON LEADING EDGE OF COLLABORATIVE CARE

**WORDS** JESSICA WOOLLARD

**PHOTOS** JEFF TOPHAM

Imagine you're being treated by an allied health care professional, a physiotherapist or occupational therapist, for example, and you find you're unable to remember everything your doctor told you to relay to the practitioner. You were supposed to mention a particular condition and the affected muscle group, but you can't recall the details. You're also not sure what part of your medical history is relevant, so you leave important bits out. You don't want to waste anyone's time.

If only the practitioner could consult your medical chart. Or better yet, speak with your doctor directly. But that's not how health care practices are set up in BC. Until now.

Collaboration and information sharing are the foundation of BC's new primary care networks (PCNs), where professionals work in partnership with one another to deliver family medicine. The team-based approach is poised to transform health care in the province.

PEA members Jennifer Gabrys and Leslie Spohr are at the leading edge of this new model of care. Both physiotherapists, they are part of the Ponderosa Primary Care Centre in Penticton, the first PCN to open in BC, in November 2019. More than 35 centres are planned to open across the province in the next three to four years.

Gabrys and Spohr, who job-share at the Ponderosa centre, say they were keen to join the new team-based model when they heard about the opportunity.

"We see how collaboration leads to effective treatment," Spohr says.

"People are getting better care than they ever have before," Gabrys adds.

The Ponderosa team includes six doctors and two nurse practitioners as the primary care providers. Their work is complemented by registered nurses, a dietician, occupational therapist, social worker and physiotherapists Gabrys and Spohr.

"This model was geared to be the 'home' for the patient," says Spohr. "Everyone knows the patient, knows what's going on."

"The physician-patient relationship is the centre, and the team supports it," Gabrys explains. "We're always consulting back with the physician."

Gabrys, who specializes in pelvic health, has been practicing physiotherapy since 2000. After receiving bachelor degrees in genetics and microbiology (1994) and physiotherapy (2000) from the University of British Columbia, Gabrys worked as a physiotherapist in New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. She gained experience in both private clinics and hospitals, including Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and the teaching hospital at Harvard University. She and her husband then lived in New Mexico for several years before returning to Canada in 2017, settling in the Okanagan with their two children.

Spohr completed a degree in general biology at the University College of the Cariboo (now Thompson Rivers University), in her hometown of Kamloops, followed by a master's degree in physiotherapy from the University of Alberta in 2009. In her early career she focused on orthopaedics, working primarily in private practice. The mother of three then pursued additional training in pelvic-health physiotherapy through BC Women's Hospital in Vancouver, an educational experience that complements her work at Ponderosa, she says.

Both women continue to work in private practice in addition to being at Ponderosa. They say the experience of working as private therapists gives them insight into the benefits of the primary care network model.

In a private setting, Gabrys explains, physiotherapists rely on the patient to provide their medical history, which may or may not be complete. Frequently, practitioners are required to track down the patient's medical files and test results, which can lead to delays and negatively impact the delivery of care.

At Ponderosa, however, all health care professionals in the clinic have access to the patient's history. "We get to see all of the physician notes and all the health authority notes, for example, about any surgeries," Gabrys says.

The patient benefits again when the practitioners do what the clinics were designed to facilitate: collaboration.

"We can hold a case conference to get together and discuss the patient and make a plan to support this person," Spohr says. "Or we can ask questions in passing in the hallway. Being in the same clinic saves a lot of time and resources."

The benefit to the patient is clear: the patient gets better care from the right specialist with the right information at the right time.





**ABOVE:** Jennifer Gabrys at the Ponderosa Care Centre in Penticton, BC

The benefit to the professionals is equally apparent, Gabrys says. “When I see someone at the clinic, it’s frequently more of an education, a starting point for someone who might never have seen a physiotherapist before.”

The health care system as a whole is also improved by the PCN, adds Gabrys. With health care professionals supporting the work of physicians, the physicians are able to take on more clients, which reduces the waitlist for a family physician in BC.

“People are getting more well-rounded and preventative care . . . at the source of their problem. They’re getting movement and exercise, diet and nutrition, basic functioning, counselling with a social worker, all of those basic needs.”

The effects ripple even further. When people have a family doctor, they’re less likely to go to a hospital emergency room for treatment, thereby alleviating the pressure on acute emergency care.

For Spohr, the positive results she sees at the Ponderosa clinic bode well for patients and health care in British Columbia.

“As I go along this career, I realize there is no one profession that could cure or fix a person,” she says. “It takes a multidisciplinary approach. It takes many eyes, not any one practitioner. At the clinic, someone can come knock on your door and say ‘what would you do about this?’ It’s set up to allow each profession to shine and more efficiently treat the patient.”

Gabrys and Spohr feel lucky to be part of the first Primary Care Network to open in BC, a model that is helping set the stage for future centres that will deliver a similar level of well-rounded care to patients. Their experience is an affirmation of the success story of PCNs and the benefits of investing in collaborative health care.

Says Gabrys, “Collaborative care is the way of the future.”



# BARGAINING UPDATE

## MANY PEA CHAPTERS WILL BE AT THE TABLE THIS FALL AND INTO 2022

**WORDS** SCOTT MCCANNELL

Most PEA chapters are or will be busy with collective bargaining over the next year. At the time of writing, the PEA has begun bargaining with HEU, the union that employs our Hospital Employees' Staff Union (HESU) members. Preparation is underway for the Law Society Lawyers (LSL) members, whose agreement expires at the end of 2021, and for the Government Licensed Professionals (GLP), Oil and Gas Commission (OGC), Health Science Professionals (HSP) and Family Maintenance Agency (FMA) agreements, which expire in March 2022. The University of Victoria (UVic) agreement expires at the end of June 2022 and Legal Aid BC's (LABC) expires in September 2022. The PEA is working with all of these chapters to engage members and ensure we are prepared for the next round.

### **Public Sector Employers' Council Mandates**

Approximately 90 per cent of PEA members fall under Public Sector Employers' Counsel (PSEC) mandates, including all of the chapters noted above except for the HESU and LSL. PSEC was established in the mid '90s with the key objective of controlling compensation costs. No other province in Canada has the same level of government control over public sector bargaining mandates and wages. Unfortunately for the 378,000 workers in BC who fall under PSEC, and more specifically for PEA members, compensation levels haven't kept up relative to the private sector and public sector employees outside of PSEC.

PSEC has complete authority over employers. In past rounds of bargaining, PSEC has required that all employer proposals, and any tentative agreements, be fully costed and approved by PSEC before an agreement is reached with a union. A recent bargaining update from PSEC gives an overview of its most recent mandate from 2019 and a list of all of the unions settling under it!. PSEC mandates have mostly taken a one-size-fits-all approach (i.e., generic general wage increases).

PEA members' frustrations about low pay and small salary increases are shared across BC's public sector unions and their members. Most public sector salaries in BC are in the lower third of comparator provinces and also lag the private sector.

As PSEC is a formidable obstacle, a well-prepared bargaining committee with a united membership behind them is an absolute necessity in BC public sector bargaining. PEA staff have reached out to PSEC to request a meeting in September. We plan to continue to message that compensation increases must ensure more labour market competitiveness, and that inflation-based increases are not enough to address recruitment and retention issues. We have delivered this message in a handful of meetings with government leaders over the last year, including the Attorney General, the Minister of Forests, Energy and Mines, and the leader of the Green Party. We are seeking additional meetings with the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation.

### BC Federation of Labour

The PEA participates on the BC Federation of Labour Public Sector Working Group, a group of unions that have bargaining units that fall under PSEC mandates. The group shares invaluable information and strategy. At this table, the PEA is promoting the establishment of clear objectives for the next round of bargaining that would enable solidarity and a coordinated response by public sector unions to the government's next mandate.

At this time, the government has yet to release information about the next mandate, except that they are starting to consider it. This seems late given most of these agreements will expire by early 2022. Representatives from the BCFED will continue to press for information about the government's thinking regarding bargaining and to promote a less restrictive government mandate.

### Factors Impacting Bargaining

The following section provides some additional data and information relevant to collective bargaining in BC.

### BC Provincial Budget

The table below shows the province's deficit forecast for the next three years from the BC Budget of spring 2021<sup>2</sup>.

	21/22	22/23	23/24
DEFICIT (BILLIONS)	9.69	5.48	4.32

The budget does not reference public sector bargaining, and its forecasted allowance and contingencies do not seem to incorporate PSEC-mandate funding amounts. Regardless of economic recovery in BC, deficit management will be a significant consideration for the government in developing the next mandate.

### Cost of Living and General Wage Increases

Members' who are under the mandate have had general wage increases have just kept up with the consumer price index (CPI) over many years. According to the latest cost of living data from BC Stats, the province's CPI as of July 2021 was 3.1 per cent higher than last July<sup>3</sup>. It is noteworthy that shelter costs over this period increased by 5.6 per cent, while the costs of home ownership rose by 6.5 per cent.

Looking ahead, current inflation forecasts for the province range from 2 per cent over the medium term (BC Budget 21), to 1.8 per cent for 2022 (RBC Economics), to 1.9 per cent and 1.8 per cent for 2022 and 2023 (Central 1 Economics).

### Wage Increase Projections and Settlements

Recent figures from the Conference Board of Canada anticipate an average wage increase of 1.6 per cent for unionized workers in Canada in 2021, down from 2 per cent in 2020<sup>4</sup>. This includes an expected increase of 1.9 per cent for private sector organizations, compared with a 1.5 per cent increase across the public sector. Provinces whose increases are likely to exceed the national average include Saskatchewan (1.8 per cent) and British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario (all 1.7 per cent).

Two useful resources for reviewing union wage rates and projections are the BC Bargaining settlement summaries and the Collective Bargaining Bulletin series issued by the Business Council of BC, both available on the BC Bargaining Database website at [www.bcbargaining.ca](http://www.bcbargaining.ca). In a recent

summary report of new agreements, the site details various settlements with increases that are generally in the range of 2 per cent annually. It is noteworthy that two of the sectors mentioned in the report, the forest industry and municipalities, provide higher increases in some instances. PSEC does not have oversight of municipal bargaining<sup>5</sup>.

The federal government also produces reports on public and private sector union wage settlements from across Canada<sup>6</sup>. The table below uses an average percentage adjustment over the term of the settlement to compare BC union wage increases with average rates in the Canadian public and private sectors. BC is showing similar settlement outcomes to other provinces.

JURISDICTION AND SECTOR	2021
BC AVERAGE PERCENTAGE ADJUSTMENT (PUBLIC & PRIVATE)	2.1%
PRIVATE SECTOR CANADA AVERAGE PERCENTAGE ADJUSTMENT	2.2%
PUBLIC SECTOR AVERAGE PERCENTAGE ADJUSTMENT	1.4%

Following is a table showing the average annual increase in Canada over the last five years.

	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20
CANADA, ALL	1.3%	1.7%	1.3%	1.7%	1.6%

### Length of Term for Settlements in BC

Regarding the average length of agreements, the BC Business Council notes that 36-month terms remain the most common in the private sector, although recent years have seen a moderate rise in 48-month contracts from 20 per cent to 30 per cent of total agreements. In the public sector, on the other hand, the Council sees a clear shift towards shorter contracts. "Five years ago, 60-month terms were widespread, making up 40% of all contracts," the Council noted in a recent bulletin. "But more recently just 4% of contracts matched this duration. The proportion of 48-month contracts has also fallen. The shift has been to 36-month terms, which have gone from making up 10% of all contracts to 55%<sup>7</sup>."

### Looking Ahead

Almost all of BC's public sector will be at the bargaining table in 2022, including many PEA chapters. The PEA will continue to prepare with bargaining committees, promote a unified approach with other public sector unions, and seek the ear of both senior public servants and elected officials. Government needs to understand that sustainable public services will depend on addressing the myriad recruitment and retention problems that have arisen in our province as a result of PSEC-enabled wage restraint since the mid-'90s.

Many of our bargaining committees have had their sleeves rolled up for months and are developing comprehensive plans for member engagement, lobbying and, of course, proposal finalization. As a member, please support your committee by engaging in the bargaining process: complete surveys, stay up to date, attend meetings and share your views. The PEA will aim to provide chapters with the resources they need and to keep everyone up to date throughout the bargaining process.

1. Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat, Provincial Bargaining Update, April 13, 2021. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/services-policies-for-government/public-sector-management/psec/2019-bargaining-update.pdf>
2. See British Columbia. Ministry of Finance, Budget 21: Stronger BC for Everyone. Budget and Fiscal Plan 2021/22 - 2023/24. Victoria, BC, April 20, 2021. [https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2021/pdf/2021\\_Budget%20and%20Fiscal%20Plan.pdf](https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2021/pdf/2021_Budget%20and%20Fiscal%20Plan.pdf)
3. British Columbia. BC Stats, Consumer Price Index (Victoria, BC, [July 2021]). [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/economy/cpi/cpi\\_highlights.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/data/statistics/economy/cpi/cpi_highlights.pdf)
4. Jim Wilson, "Projected Wage Increases 'Fall Short' for Unionized Workers in 2021." Canadian HR Reporter, February 24, 2021. <https://www.hrreporter.com/focus-areas/compensation-and-benefits/projected-wage-increases-fall-short-for-unionized-workers-in-2021/338114>
5. BC Bargaining Database, Collective Bargaining Bulletin, volume 53, issue 1, Feb/Mar 2021. [https://www.bcbargaining.ca/content/1114/2021\\_01\\_Settlements.pdf](https://www.bcbargaining.ca/content/1114/2021_01_Settlements.pdf)
6. Canada. Environment and Social Development Canada, "Major Wage Settlements by Sector and Jurisdiction." <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/collective-bargaining-data/wages/wages-jurisdiction-sector.html>
7. BC Business Council. Collective Bargaining Bulletin, volume 53, issue 1, Feb/March 2021. [https://www.bcbargaining.ca/content/3320/2021\\_01\\_First-Year-Wage-Increases-Have-Edged-Gradually-Higher.pdf](https://www.bcbargaining.ca/content/3320/2021_01_First-Year-Wage-Increases-Have-Edged-Gradually-Higher.pdf)

# 2021 SCHOLARSHIP AND BURSARY WINNERS

For 28 years the PEA has been giving scholarships and bursaries to PEA members and their families. This year, the Awards Committee was pleased to give scholarships to ten PEA members and their relatives who are profiled here.

In addition, ten bursaries were awarded to the following members: Sabina Donnelly, Leia Fougere, Angela Foulkes, Wilson Li, Roger John, Marcus Jung, Rebecca Kaukinen, Christopher Sanii, Chelsea Seminoff, and Lindsay Vanstone.

Applications for the 2022 scholarship and bursary awards will reopen in the spring. For more details visit [www.pea.org/bursaries](http://www.pea.org/bursaries).



"It is an honour to receive this scholarship. My Ph.D. will allow me to achieve both goals of contributing to effective wildlife conservation in Canada and to continue my PEA work with my unit."

Alina Fisher

"I am in my third year at Thompson Rivers University; I am majoring in General Biology with a minor in Psychology. I'm hoping to pursue a career in Psychiatry. I am extremely thankful to receive this scholarship."

Jaida Lewis



"For my future education, I plan on pursuing a Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at UVic followed by a Master's and a Ph.D. degree. This scholarship will help ease the financial burden and reduce the amount of time I need to work to pay for the additional fees, allowing me more time to study."

Aidan Coppard

"This scholarship will allow me to focus on my studies. I am planning to obtain my Master's in Political Science and to work for the Provincial government or health authorities in the area of policy development as it relates to resource development and social impact management."

Barbara Oke



"I am currently completing a guidance studies diploma at UBC. I hope to continue furthering my education as long as I am able to do so. With the scholarship's financial assistance, this can become a reality.."

Kasja Stroh



"I aspire to one day earn my PhD in psychology, and this scholarship will help to make this goal feel more realistic. I want to have a career in educational assistance for children with developmental disorders, such as ADHD and Autism."

Lindsay Drabitt





"I am currently working towards a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria. This scholarship will support me greatly on my journey to becoming a certified urban planner in Victoria, BC."

Lauren Hutchinson

"I am pursuing my graduate studies in Mechanical Engineering and am currently registered as a full time student with University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus. This scholarship will help me to focus more on my studies instead of worrying about the cost."

Umair Hassan



"The PEA Scholarship will support with financing my full-time studies at Adler University in the Ph.D. Industrial and Organizational Psychology program. Achievement of this degree will open further opportunities for me to teach and coach senior professionals."

Melissa Fahlman



"I will be going into my second year of undergraduate studies in sciences at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. My goal is to graduate from university with an undergraduate degree, majoring in biochemistry. I hope to progress my education further by applying to Pharmacy school."

Megan Owens



# PEA UPDATES

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

Save the date for your chapter's upcoming AGM:

- **FMA:** DECEMBER 2, 2021 4:45 – 6:00 P.M.
- **GLP:** OCTOBER 21, 2021 3:00 – 5:00 P.M.
- **HSP:** OCTOBER 15, 2021 12:00 – 1:00 P.M.
- **ORL:** SEPTEMBER 27, 2021 6:30 – 8:00 P.M.
- **UVIC:** NOVEMBER 3, 2021 12:00 – 1:30 P.M.

## OPERATIONS UPDATE

The PEA office in Victoria remains closed, and a future reopening in 2021 will be assessed based on the status of the pandemic. All services continue to be provided remotely and virtually where possible.

## GLP GRANTS AND DONATIONS

GLP members can submit requests for funding of up to \$200 for an activity or event to the GLP Grants and Donations Committee. Grants and donations are administered by the GLP Executive based on their consistency with the chapter's strategic plan or promotion of the Association and GLP Chapter.

For the full eligibility considerations and policy visit our chapter webpage. All grant and donation requests must be submitted using the online form at [pea.org/chapters/glp/grant-form](http://pea.org/chapters/glp/grant-form). Remember to submit your online request early and before December 2021 for year-end events!

## CONGRATULATIONS

We wish GLP member Ken Chalmers all the best in his retirement. Ken was a long-serving local rep who was active with the PEA since 1995. He attended many union events and training sessions and was an amazing advocate for his chapter.

If you would like to acknowledge a retiring PEA member, please email [jwhetter@pea.org](mailto:jwhetter@pea.org).

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## DOZER DREAMS OF FAIR WAGES FOR HESU MEMBERS ON STRIKE

**P|E|A**

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