



Towards a more engaged union

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We often find our greatest strength when confronted by adversity.

As a physiotherapist, I have seen people discover incredible resources inside themselves, and use them to overcome great odds. And I think every one of us working with patients and clients have seen this time and again.

People are tough and adaptable. Organizations can be too - if they listen to and engage the people they represent.

In the four decades since HSA was founded by a small number of professionals, we've seen our share of challenges.

In the 1970s, not long after HSA came into existence, the government and employers took advantage of our "no strike" clause to push terms that threatened our new membership. We adapted, put strike action back on the table, and moved into a stronger negotiating position.

In the 1990s, the government's sweeping re-organization of the industrial bargaining model threatened to assign our members to other unions. We fought back, kept the professions we'd long represented, and adapted to the new landscape.

Now, we are threatened by the aggressive raiding tactics of another union.

Many of us work alongside RNs daily. They stand shoulder to shoulder with us, their professionalism, dedication and skill similar to that of HSA members.

Their union should do the same. But instead of standing shoulder to shoulder with HSA, they are attacking us, raiding RPNs and now even non-nursing professions, affecting our daily work and weakening our ability to push for much needed improvements to the health care system itself.

It is no small threat. But it can - and will - make us stronger.

HSA has begun expanding our capacity for organizing. We must go further, deploying powerful new technology and spending more time with members at the worksite.

At the coming convention delegates will discuss plans to provide more support for stewards. They are the leaders in the workplace, and we must do more to help them assist, inspire and organize our members.

Organizing and engagement will make us stronger, because it will make our members stronger. Because it's not about telling people what to do, it's about helping people discover their own power to make a better world.

There is hard work ahead, but I am optimistic, and excited. The world is increasingly unpredictable and the security and strength of union membership is more important now than it has been in generations. A union that listens to and builds on the strength of its members has a great future.

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