



Choosing to be stronger

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BY VAL AVERY, PRESIDENT

I am very proud of what we have achieved in the last 45 years.

I am especially proud of what we have been able to achieve in these last few years.

In the face of governments determined to squeeze our members for every penny, we have adapted, finding ways to achieve security in the face of sweeping change, wage growth in the face of austerity, and protection of hard-won benefits in the face of cuts.

We have made real progress on tackling the issues facing our members – like violence – while pushing for change on the issues that face the people we serve – like funding for programs, minimum wages, and protection of public health care.

In the face of a divided labour movement, where the BCNU now seeks to poach members in all health professions in a senseless grab for power, we are adapting, finding ways to become a more engaged union, mobilizing our members to stand up against those who would undermine our professional relationships and disrupt the health care system.

And in the face of a changing workplace, with more member grievances, more legal challenges, more arbitrations, more disability claims, more appeals every day, we have adapted, finding ways to provide members with more support, on more complex issues, with ever greater expertise.

But we have had to cut corners to meet increasing demands. We have deferred spending on matters that could no longer be put off.

HSA has not raised dues in 19 years. I'm proud of that. To me that shows we have honoured our responsibility to respect how hard our members work for their dues.

But our members are asking for us to do more. And so we faced a very tough choice.

We could have chosen to do nothing. Our union would survive. But it would be smaller. And it would be weaker. It would be ill prepared for the challenges of the future, never mind the ones we face every day.

Instead, delegates to the May convention chose to support a modest increase in member dues. A choice they did not take lightly.

After much debate and discussion, they chose to adapt to a world very different from that of 19 years ago. To protect members against the predatory BCNU. To provide members with the innovative and specialized support needed in modern labour relations. And to protect members against government that seeks to reduce our pay, cut our benefits and impoverish public health care.

They chose to move forward, fight harder, and make the union stronger.

Not every member will agree. But all will benefit.

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