

BULLETIN

Labour has a role in politics

December 1, 2003

The Report: December 2003 vol.24 num.6

by AUDREY MacMILLAN



ith two elections in the not so distant future, a presentation by the Canadian Labour Congress at the recent BC Federation of Labour policy convention in Vancouver gave union members in British Columbia a lot to think about.

Danny Mallette, national director of the CLC, and Lily Olson, a CLC representative for the Prairie region, outlined for the delegates the "Our Province. It Works" campaign spearheaded by the Canadian Labour Congress in this past fall's Saskatchewan election.

The campaign started in 2002, when the labour movement commissioned a poll of union members to determine what issues were important to working people in Saskatchewan in the upcoming election. Union members identified five priorities: Health care, education and training, crown corporations and public services, jobs and the economy, and sustainable environment and communities.

With that information in hand, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour conducted a political campaign of radio ads, organizers, leaflets, television ads to keep labour's issues front and centre in the public debate. Union members met face to face with other union members, their friends and their neighbours to engage them in discussion about the issues important to them.

Sincere advertising and creative leaflets, including a fun scratch-lottery "ticket" took the message to people in a form they could relate to.

The objective of the campaign was to make sure that the issues important to union members and their families were heard and debated so that working people could make a decision about how to vote in the election based on the issues that matter to them.

The labour movement's decision to focus on working people's issues, and not get caught up in partisan campaigning served to ensure that the issues important to union members were the priority in the campaign.

Here in British Columbia, the BC Federation of Labour continues to focus on issues that are important to members in unions across the province. The campaign to stop the privatization of the Coquihalla highway is just one example of how when a community works together it can make a difference.

With a federal election coming this spring, and a provincial election about 18 months away, I believe the labour movement in British Columbia should take its lead from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress and run a campaign that speaks to our members about their issues. I believe if we find the right way to talk to working people about what matters to them, then we will have made a real contribution to our political system.

I know that many HSA members are active in the political process. But I also know that many more of you are not. Our experiences at work serve as a daily reminder that governments make a huge difference in our everyday lives. We are lucky in Canada to have a political system that allows us a say in whos in charge. Its a system we should all participate in. 

Check out the Saskatchewan labour campaign on the internet at www.tappedintolabour.org. Audrey MacMillan represents Region 7 on HSAs Board of Directors.

Type:

[The Report](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017