

BULLETIN

Protecting members' rights through effective political action

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C NDP leader Joy MacPhail announced early in June that she will not be seeking the leadership of the party at the convention this coming November.

In making her announcement, she said that in the two years since the Liberal government's landslide victory, her party has not only survived but is on the rebound.

"In every community I've visited, I've found a fierce commitment to fairness, to sustainability, to opportunity... and most of all, to hope," she said. That sense of hope is in no small part due to her work.

I join the chorus of admirers who have praised her work in the legislature and throughout the province under the most difficult of circumstances. In the days following the opening of the Liberal government's first legislative session, Joy MacPhail and her colleague Jenny Kwan championed the cause of health science professionals and other public service workers in their courageous and exhausting battle against Bill 28. We know now that those initial days in the legislature were personally terrifying for the two NDP MLAs, who secretly held hands under the desk for support.

And they did an amazing job.

It was the kind of job HSA was confident Joy would do when the Board of Directors decided in 1999 to support her bid for the leadership of the NDP. Her candidacy came after former Premier Glen Clark's resignation and the subsequent leadership convention of February 2000.

While Joy withdrew before the convention, and HSA joined her in supporting the eventual new premier, Ujjal Dosanjh, it was Joy's honest and up-front approach to decision-making and her strong performance as health minister that convinced the board of directors the time was right to take a stand.

It was HSA's first foray into organized provincial politics, and it was a decision taken in the best interest of the union and our membership.

The union's decision to endorse a candidate was a further step in HSA's coming of political age. We have learned over the years that while labour relations is the core of our business, government relations and political action are critical elements to doing the best to represent our members' interests.

Just as the past two years have been years of growth for Joy MacPhail and the NDP, they have been years of maturation for HSA. Members across the province are doing more now than we have ever done before to

influence the decision-makers in government who set the scene for the work we do in health care and social services.

I am excited about the work our constituency liaisons will be doing to ensure those decision-makers know about issues important to HSA members. And I am excited about what members are doing throughout BC by getting involved in their communities to stand up for what you believe in whether it's protecting public health care, opposing the privatization of the Coquihalla highway, or speaking up for patients and clients.

HSA has had a political action policy since 1991, but I will always equate our endorsement of Joy as a significant milestone for our union. For that, and the amazing energy and effort she has put into her two years as opposition leader as well as her 12 years in government I thank her. 

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