

BULLETIN

Consolidating strengths, setting direction: working to protect services

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record number of members attended HSA's 33rd annual convention, held April 23 and 24 in Burnaby. Delegates spent two days listening to reports and guest speakers, and vigorously debating resolutions to help determine the union's course of action over the next year.

Delegates spoke passionately about the devastating effects of the provincial Liberals' cuts to health care and community social services. Members described the resulting harm to patients, clients, and their communities, as well as their constant struggle at work to do more with less.

They expressed their sadness at seeing fellow workers laid off in unprecedented numbers, and their fears for what this will mean for the quality of patient and client care.

They spoke of their anger and frustration at seeing workers in community health and community social services forced to accept concessionary contracts, and the looming strike in the facilities support sector – a strike that members said would not have to happen, if the government would allow free and fair collective bargaining.

Faced with so many threats to their patients and clients, and to their right to fair compensation and working conditions, members reaffirmed the need to continue strengthening union solidarity, both within HSA and with the rest of the labour movement – especially with other health care unions currently engaged in collective bargaining.

Resolutions were passed calling on HSA to lobby the provincial government to stop cutting social services, and to stop contracting-out and privatizing services provided by HSA members.

Members also directed the union to work with the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress to educate members and the public about the negative effects globalization could have on our public health care system, and to lobby our governments on this issue.

A recurring theme at convention was the need to become more active politically, both as individuals and through the union, especially over the next 18 months as BC citizens are given the opportunity to elect new federal, provincial and municipal representatives.

Delegates passed a series of resolutions to support the objective of electing representatives who will support progressive legislation, particularly in the areas of health care, other public services, labour relations, labour standards, and human rights. These resolutions included:

- Providing financial support to members running for office, where both the member and party support issues

important to HSA and its members;

- Increasing the amount of financial support HSA can provide to members working on approved election campaigns;
- Providing financial support to members to attend non-partisan campaign schools, which teach participants how to run election campaigns, as well as what's involved if they want to run for office; and
- Authorizing a modest, one-time increase in HSA's fund to support members' involvement in electoral politics during 2005, when there will be both a provincial election, and province-wide municipal elections.

Delegate Janice Morrison, a physiotherapist from Kootenay Lake District Hospital, spoke in favour of these resolutions as a means of promoting the important goal of increasing the number of women elected to political office. "Knowledge is power," Morrison said.

"I attended the Women's Campaign School in February, and it was excellent. I would urge members to register early for the next session of this campaign school." 

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

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