

BULLETIN

## Union launches fight against WCB cuts

July 1, 2004

### The Report: July / August 2004 vol.25 num.4

by CAROL RIVIERE



**SA activists and occupational health** and safety stewards recently attended a one-day workshop at HSA's office, to prepare to go back to their communities to fight against the provincial Liberals' program of ongoing cuts to workers' compensation benefits, and workplace health and safety.

The workshop began with a review of the many cuts being made to workers' compensation, and to the prevention system. Jackie Spain, Region 9 Director and chair of HSA's OH&S Committee, then discussed some of the reasons why HSA members are particularly concerned about this issue.

"Most HSA members work in health care - the sector with the highest injury rate in BC. Our members need better prevention and workers' compensation services, not cuts," Spain said.

"Our members treat injured workers, and see first hand the effect of inadequate prevention, cuts to worksite first aid requirements and inadequate rehabilitation services from WCB," she continued.

"In addition, the increasing number of workers' compensation claims that are denied or prematurely terminated, is shifting huge costs from the employer-funded workers' compensation system to the under-funded public health care system, as well as to other social programs funded by taxpayers, and to workplace extended health and long term disability plans."

Spain outlined the special perspective HSA members bring to fighting back against these cuts. "Many of our members have first hand knowledge of the effects of inadequate prevention - they've suffered a workplace injury themselves, or have colleagues, friends or family who have," she said. "Others have treated injured workers, and know the devastating effects these injuries can have on workers and their families."

Spain concluded by describing some of the expertise HSA members bring to fighting these cuts. "Many HSA members have the education and experience to understand highly technical occupational health and safety issues, such as the impact of weakening protection against chemical or radiation exposure, and are good communicators who can help the public understand these issues," Spain said.

"The public knows that HSA members are knowledgeable, caring professionals, and that gives us a lot of credibility."

Workshop participants discussed ways to educate their communities about these issues, and to galvanize the public to oppose the cuts. They also practiced relevant skills, including writing letters to the editor and meeting with their MLAs on various aspects of the cuts to workers' compensation, and prevention.

HSA will support these members and help them connect with other union activists who are fighting these cuts

in their communities through the BC Federation of Labour's WCB Fightback campaign. 

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180 East Columbia  
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website  
[www.hsabc.org](http://www.hsabc.org)

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