

Minority government an opportunity for members

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by CINDY STEWART



With the federal election behind us, the election of a minority Liberal government produces an interesting dynamic - one that presents a wonderful opportunity for HSA members to ensure issues important to you remain front and centre.

During the election campaign, all the parties acknowledged that health care is a central concern for Canadians. Canadians also told their prospective representatives that they value social programs that provide for the most vulnerable in our society. Both these issues have been the subject of debate at HSA conventions and are reflected in the activity of individual members and committees. Not surprising, as these are the very services that HSA members provide and they understand, on a personal level, their importance to so many.

With a minority government in place, politicians of every political stripe will have to be more attuned to the issues that are important to Canadians. There are opportunities to make real effective change in the policies and practices of our federal government. Remember, it was under a minority government that the important social programs like Medicare and the Canada Pension Plan were introduced.

As members of the national Canadian Health Professions Secretariat, we are working with unions in every province to heighten the awareness of the issues health science professionals are facing nationwide. Across Canada, including British Columbia, there is an appalling lack of action being taken to address the growing shortage of the health professionals who aren't doctors or nurses. It is a sad commentary on how superficial the understanding is when commitments to improving access to clinical, diagnostic and rehabilitation services are more often about upgrading equipment than they are about the professionals who deliver the service.

The June federal election showed us that elections are important, and that our individual choices and actions can make a significant difference. There's no evidence stronger of that than an election where 45 votes determines who represents New Westminster and Coquitlam residents - a New Democrat or a Conservative MP.

And that is why HSA's convention delegates continue to press the union to increase our political involvement.

Last year, the union initiated a "Constituency Liaison" pilot project (see [article in this issue](#)). Constituency Liaisons are members in specific ridings who will be raising awareness of HSA issues with their provincial MLAs. As well, members who are concerned about the Workers' Compensation legislation have been working with allies in their communities to broaden the understanding of what the amendments mean (see [article in this issue](#)). In addition to all this activity, this spring, convention delegates passed a number of resolutions supporting continued political action by the union - from lobbying governments and politicians to supporting HSA members who want to get involved in the political process. HSA activists have come to understand that the political climate, provincially and federally, has significant influence in their ability to represent members

in their workplace - and they have asked their union to take a lead in building the capacity of individual members to get involved.

As we all know, British Columbians are going to the polls next spring to elect a provincial government. This is the time to get active in pursuing the issues that are important to HSA members.

I encourage you to get involved. Whether that means writing a letter to the editor, meeting with your MLA, getting involved in your labour council or another community organization is up to you.

There is no question your voice counts in an election year, just as your vote counts on election day. 

Cindy Stewart is president of the Health Sciences Association of BC.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

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