

BULLETIN

Facing the future with renewed determination

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by CINDY STEWART

Throughout the fall, your board of directors hosted the annual regional meetings to hear from the members about your issues and concerns.

Following the summer of contract talks, job action and a change in government, the regional meetings were a timely opportunity for all of us to review the work of the union, what we need to do better, and what we can do differently.

We are facing tremendous change in the sectors in which our members work. The provincial government is conducting □core reviews□ of all the services government delivers, and all ministries, including the two Ministries of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development have been ordered to reduce their budgets by at least 30 per cent. On top of that, despite promising not to cut program spending in health and education, the Campbell government has ordered a freeze on those budgets, has refused to fund the wage increases they imposed in the summer, leaving it up to health authorities to find the money in their regions.

This, combined with the restructuring of the health regions announced in mid-December, and the decisions to de-list a number of health care services fuels speculation about exactly what health care and social services British Columbians will have access to in the coming years. As the providers of those services, HSA members can be assured of a tumultuous few months, and, quite possibly, years.

With that scenario ahead of us, and the experiences of the summer behind us, the board of directors approached the 2002 budget with the goal of ensuring we are well prepared to respond to the anticipated challenges. The new budget reflects a reconfigured management, consolidation of resources to better respond to emerging issues, and enhanced labour relations and communications staff.

In this new structure, we have appointed two new Executive Directors to head up the Legal Services and Labour Relations departments. We are pleased that long time advocate Jeanne Meyers has accepted the position of Executive Director □ Legal Services, and Ron Ohmart, a 12-year veteran of labour relations and negotiations with HSA, has agreed to serve as Executive Director □ Labour Relations. A Membership Services Co-ordinator will lead a newly created Strategic Communications and Membership Development team, which will focus the union□s communications, education, organizing and research resources to allow HSA to respond to the changes the Liberal government has in store for us.

I am excited about this new structure. It will give us the resources to support the work of HSA members in communities across the province who will be facing changes in the delivery of health care and social services to British Columbians.

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