

BULLETIN

## **HSA members need quality workplaces, incentives to remain at work**

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by BRIEGE McCONVILLE

As the newly-elected representative for Region 4, writing this report came as quite a challenge. After some thought, I decided that my own experience as one of the often-reported demographically aging members of HSA might be relevant to many fellow members who are in the same boat.

As with all HSA members, we have been caught up in the turmoil in the health care system over the past number of years ... and some of us have begun to feel that our expertise, experience, and dedication ... all so critical to health outcomes for our patients ... have become increasingly undervalued.

As a Cardiac Ultrasound Technologist, I have worked in the public health care system for more years than I care to discuss. Over that time, I have seen many changes in health care, in the way it is delivered and organized by governments (with regionalization, for example) and by management (in various restructuring schemes within facilities as well as regions). In spite of all these much-trumpeted changes which were all supposed to improve patient care, nothing has really changed.

Through all the reorganizations to health care delivery brought in by consultants and management ... -fiscal management," regionalization, -program management," and having -customers" instead of patients ... people still get sick, come to the hospital, and ask HSA members and our colleagues for help.

When I hear references to so-called -patient focused care" as something that is supposed to be a new concept, I wonder what on earth I and all my fellow HSA members have been doing all these years. We have seen that most -patient focused care" health delivery programs introduced in the 1990s, modeled on production-line methods in the manufacturing industry, just doesn't work for service-oriented sectors like health.

And now, after so many years of changes and funding cuts by the federal government, we have to look forward to the likelihood of a new provincial government which no doubt will want to make more changes -to improve the delivery of health care." I say just let the HSA health care professionals do the jobs we have been trained to do.

I attended HSA's recent 30th Anniversary Convention, and felt right at home with many of the other gracefully aging ... as well as very youthful ... HSA members and delegates from all around the province. Delegates expressed great concern about staff shortages, overwork and stress in the workplace, much of it resulting from the recent and ongoing reorganizations, as well as cumulative effects from the federal cuts in the mid-90s.

But the main concern expressed by members in Region 4, as well as other regions, was the negotiations currently underway for a new paramedical professional contract.

After having suffered through the many reorganizations and having subsidized the system through the lean

years, members will stand fast for a substantial wage increase in this round of talks.

HSA members need a wage increase to make our professions attractive again for young people, so that they will join our ranks and fill the many, many vacancies around the province.

These -vacancies," of course, are usually being filled in the interim by over-worked, over-extended health workers like us. Not only does this mean it is increasingly difficult to give each patient the full attention they deserve, the stress severely curtails our ability to enjoy the professions weve trained so hard for.

The public deserves the best quality health care possible. And that means we need a better compensation package so that we can once again have a full complement of health professionals to meet our patients needs.

*Briege McConville represents Region 4 on HSAs Board of Directors.*

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