



BULLETIN

Members hold the key for bargaining in 2001

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by CINDY STEWART

Whats it going to take? Hard work and determination on the part of each and every health professional that HSA represents.

In mid-November, delegates to HSAs Paramedical Professional Bargaining Conference met to determine the priorities for HSAs 10,000 health science professionals in the upcoming round of negotiations. The conference coincided with the launch of our campaign Can You See the Crisis? - drawing attention to the growing shortage of health science professionals in many BC communities and the effect it has on quality of care.

In response to our campaign, I have been interviewed on several radio programs including CBC Prince George, CFX in Victoria, Eagle radio in Comox, CKNW in Vancouver and a web broadcast radio program on MyCityRadio.com. In addition, BCTV has aired three stories on the shortage of pharmacists, physiotherapists, and ultrasound technologists. Ads have run in a number of newspapers around the province and most community papers covered our press release that followed the bargaining conference.

Weve heard from the new Minister of Health, Corky Evans, how his recent visits to various hospitals have enlightened him about how the shortages are affecting our members ability to provide optimum care. This message was reinforced when HSA met with the Minister as part of the preparations for the governments Health Action Plan for BC. As some of you may know, the plan recognizes the need to recruit and retain more health science professionals.

Our inclusion in the health plan did not come by accident: it was a result of months of hard work whereby the union and our outspoken members have articulated that the human resource challenges facing health care go beyond doctors and nurses.

Thank you to all the stewards and members who helped by providing the anecdotes and stories about how the skill shortage is affecting your communities. Your contributions have made a significant difference. However, I want to emphasize that this is only the beginning. As we prepare for negotiations, HSA members must reiterate this message at every opportunity.

How many of you have logged onto the internet at www.hsabc.org and sent e-mails to the Premier, Minister of Health and your local MLAs, calling for an action plan to address the shortage of health science professionals? Have you written a letter to the editor explaining how the shortage is affecting your profession or the level of services in your community? Have you requested a meeting with your local MLA to brief them on the crisis, or attended a health board meeting to raise the issue?

The campaign has been launched; now it needs your help to give it life.

Addressing the shortage of health science professionals has short, medium and long term solutions. A start would be wages and working conditions that will attract and retain professionals in the system.

And what is it going to take to negotiate a collective agreement that reflects the skills, education and experience of health science professionals?

I think you know the answer.

And the union cant do it without you.

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