

BULLETIN

Never a dull moment in Region 3

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by CHERYL GREENHALGH

Greetings from Region 3. We are HSA members working in almost 40 different facilities located on the North Shore and in the cities from Burnaby to Maple Ridge. As in other regions, the past year has not been a boring one.

Congratulations must go out to our members at SHARE Family and Community Services who have just recently ratified their first collective agreement after a long negotiation. Also, we want to welcome those members who have just joined HSA through our newest certification at the Victoria Rest Home in New Westminster.

The boundaries of Region 3 conform to those of the two Regional Health Boards of the North Shore and Burnaby-Simon Fraser. Most of our members fall under one of these two employers, with notable exceptions including members who are under the Ministry of Children and Families.

Regionalization of our health system brought many challenges to HSA. Where once there was one Board of Directors in the province to monitor, there are now 45 Boards and Community Health Councils to get involved with. Each Board or CHC has one union-nominated member (shared between HSA, HEU and BCNU). HSA was able to nominate several of our members to Boards and CHCs across the province and for those Boards which the other unions nominated their members to sit on, HSA elected District Representatives to act as liaison and information gatherers. All of this has been a very new kind of work for our members.

In Region 3, the union nominee to the Burnaby-Simon Fraser Health Board is a BCNU activist from Ridge Meadows Hospital. This Board has been very active now for over a year and is well into the process of an Acute Care Review. There appears to be an effort to do some things on a regional basis that were once done at local facilities. In the Fall, the region approached union stewards at the acute care hospitals with the idea of doing the new employee orientations at one site only. This suggestion was met with some resistance as stewards wished to meet personally with their new members.

Recently, the administration decided to go ahead with the idea on a limited basis for three of the facilities. They made arrangements that a steward from each site would be given work time to travel to the central site to meet with their new members and conduct the orientation. To date this has happened once and the new HSA members were able to meet with a steward from their site. This takes a fair bit more time and diligence from the stewards, but hopefully any bugs in the system can be worked out if it is to be a continuing trend.

On the other side of Region 3 is the North Shore Health Board. The union nominee to this Board was a long

time HSA activist. Last Fall the HSA member felt compelled to resign from the Board over the process by which the Board dealt with the renewal of the contract for the CEO (a significant wage increase in a time of wage freezes on salaries over \$100,000). A physician member also resigned from the Board. Tensions have been high between the Board and the hospital staff as a result of this contract. A consultants report stated that the Board must be held accountable for the current situation and has outlined a number of positive steps needed to restore confidence in the delivery of health services. The Minister of Health appointed a public administrator to oversee the process. HSA supports this move and is hopeful that HSA members will be able to re-commit themselves to working in a cooperative atmosphere to serve the interests of the North Shore.

Cheryl Greenhalgh represents Region 3 on HSAs Executive Council.

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