

BULLETIN

Proud of HSAs growth

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by CINDY STEWART



t is with mixed emotions ... to say the least ... that I write my last column as HSA President.

My first few years as president were challenging. It took time for me to really fully appreciate exactly what I had got myself into and realize the full scope of my duties.

I had help along the way and learned many valuable lessons. One that never failed me was: If you want to do a good job, work with good people. And HSA has always been blessed with the best. This hasn't happened by accident - when we had the opportunity to grow, we added additional talent and skills to our family. I've come to know that because we enjoy a good reputation in the broader community, we have been able to attract some of the best people in their areas.

That reputation is enjoyed by the members as well. As I reviewed the annual reports over the past 14 years, the evolution of member involvement and activity can be tracked through the decade, including the high profile showdown during the 2001 job action. It was a time that members needed to step forward in their communities and speak about the importance of the work you do ... you did and were recognized for the eloquent and professional spokespersons that you are.

Many members "caught the bug and once turned loose, you flew. It is a genie that we will never put back in the bottle and marked yet another turning point for our union. Expression of our political action, through the "Constituency Liaison" program was sown and now we are able to speak directly to a significant number of the MLAs. Because of your credibility and approach, your calls are answered, and you've been able to deliver the message.

It is always a thrill for me when I attend a meeting with MLAs or other decision-makers and I hear "I just met one of your members. She was so impressive." And believe me, I hear it often.

As your president, I've had so many opportunities and learned so much.

Some days, the last ten years seem like a blur: the Health Accord ... and the demise of the Health Accord. Bill 28 and Bill 29, regionalization, constitutional reforms, labour disputes, negotiating within an association, imposed contracts, anti-labour legislation, market adjustments, privatization •

There have been some amazing moments and memories.

I was introduced in the Scottish Parliament the year it was formed; addressed a PSI World Congress in Japan

and had my remarks translated into seven languages; appeared in the Supreme Court of BC; been interviewed on "As it Happens"; outside CBC on Sparks Street in Ottawa; for countless print and radio media; and my moment of infamy on the front page of the Vancouver Sun.

I've met with premiers and health ministers, with government representatives of Chile and Argentina in Buenos Aires. I've been in the company of opinion shapers like Stephen Lewis, Shirley Douglas, Linda McQuaig, Neil Brooks, and Naomi Klein. I've met with labour leaders from across the globe.

I didn't do those things because I am a special person, I've been able to do those things because I held a special position.

I am so appreciative and honoured by the opportunities that being your president has provided.

And for all the people I have encountered and experiences I have had over my tenure, it is always the members who amaze, inspire and move me. You do amazing things in your community, in your professional work and for those of you answering the call, for your union. For me, that is what has made the past 14 years such a joy.

And now someone else will get the opportunity to experience those same joys and challenges.

People have asked what I will now do ... thinking my decision may have been triggered by an impending opportunity. Not the case, but someone who knows me well thought this passage from TS Eliot captures it best. He was right.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploration
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

Thank you for the opportunity to sometimes lead, to sometimes follow, and to always represent you. 

Cindy Stewart did not seek re-election as HSA president in 2007.

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