

BULLETIN

## Get political to create vibrant communities

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by REID JOHNSON



**With the summer winding down**, we find ourselves on the eve of important local elections across the province ... set for November 15 this year. But why should HSA members care?

It's simple, really: we have a responsibility to do what we can to influence decisions about the community around us.

Whether it's at the workplace, as a parent, a partner, a team member, or any other community, we have a part to play in shaping our future.

As health care and community social service workers, it is particularly important that we take the initiative to develop an understanding of and a relationship with our local politicians. Many of them will move on from the municipal to provincial or federal levels where they will have a direct influence on public policy that affects our patients, our clients and our work.

As Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti says in promoting the national *Municipalities Matter* campaign: -The decisions made by local elected officials impact every part of our lives. Union members and their families rely upon a growing list of municipal services. The services we depend on daily, such as water, housing, childcare, transit, libraries, hockey rinks, parks, pools, support for immigrants and environmental initiatives are all part of a web of vital services that must remain in public hands.

-When public services are deregulated, neglected or privatized, the whole community loses.

-Privatization (P3s under another name) and contracting out not only hurts public workers, it usually ends up costing taxpayers more money for diminished services. Thousands of quality unionized jobs with wages and benefits also disappear when governments outsource them.

-So, whether we live in an urban or rural, small or large municipality, we depend on our local governments to stand up for the rights of working families and give us access to the services we need. We need to elect local politicians who will advocate on our behalf at both the provincial and federal levels for more money for our cities. This is not a debate the labour movement is having in isolation, this is a debate happening across Canada by all sorts of groups and individuals including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)."

HSA has historically supported members to run or work in municipal elections through the unions Political Action Fund, and has provided information to members to promote their understanding of municipal issues and to motivate them to vote in these elections. This year, HSAs Board of Directors approved a

recommendation from its Political Action Committee to continue that practice.

Participation in municipal elections takes many forms ... from standing as a candidate, to lobbying candidates to support particular issues, to supporting campaigns by volunteering or donating, right through to exercising your right to vote on election day.

Through HSAs Political Action Committee and fund, the union will be working to provide you with the support and information you need to increase your involvement in the political process and to make informed decisions about the future for your local communities. 

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