

BULLETIN

Help make positive change together

December 1, 2008

The Report: December 2008 vol.29 num.5

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rganizing to Win. That was the theme of this years BC Federation of Labour convention held in Vancouver at the end of November. Much of the convention focused on the ways our labour movement is working to bring issues important to working people into our everyday interactions and discussions with our family, friends, and co-workers.

And why is that important? Because the decisions that are made at the municipal, provincial and federal levels are important to our everyday lives. HSA members, including the four who were elected to their local councils in the recent municipal elections, know that.

As the convention was winding up, the federal government started to spin into a political and constitutional turmoil that, at publication time, hadnt been sorted out. The issue that prompted the opposition parties into negotiating amongst themselves for an agreement to form a coalition government was an arrogant, blame-the-worker, anti-democratic economic statement made by the Harper government. In the face of a world-wide economic crisis, Canadians were told to stay the course, and that the best way to settle the Canadian economy would be to sell off public assets, attack pay equity legislation, place a cap on federal public employees wages and remove their right to strike.

In addition, the government proposed the best way to stimulate the Canadian economy includes a plan to quit funding political parties, undoing election financing legislation that previously leveled the political playing field by restricting campaign financing by third parties, such as corporations and unions.

The issues may seem distant from the issues that are important to your individual lives: issues like pursuing an education, working at a job you enjoy, supporting your family economically and emotionally, and being an active member in your community.

But they arent at all disconnected. What happens in Ottawa or in Victoria or at your local municipal hall affects your community and your work.

If collective bargaining rights are stripped away for one group of workers, there is no guarantee you wont be next. If government infrastructure spending declines, the impact is on your schools, your roads, your parks, and your hospitals. Thats why the labour movement across the country organized to support a coalition government ... as a way to send a strong message to the minority Conservative government that workers collective bargaining rights were hard fought for and worth saving, and that the national economy needs more than a cursory tweaking in the face of a worldwide economic crisis.

The BC Federation of Labours theme of *Organizing to Win* wasnt just about electoral politics, its about working together to win rights for working people. The campaign for an improved minimum wage continues, as do efforts to improve health and safety on the job for all workers. These are among the many issues as a labour movement we must continue to work on in order to win improvements for all working British Columbians and their families.

Whether we do that by talking to our neighbours about the issues we face at work, or we do that by supporting and electing politicians at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels who understand our concerns and our issues, its critical that we engage in our political system.

The decisions and directions of the provincial government affect most HSA members where they work ... the public health care and social services sectors. Thats why its important to engage in our political system. With the next provincial election just around the corner, I encourage all HSA members to make sure your candidates know about the services you deliver, and what they can be doing to improve the delivery of health care and social services in your community. 

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