

BULLETIN

Members lead the way to political participation

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by REID JOHNSON



ount me in. Three simple words that express the need to get involved. And the three simple words that the BC Federation of Labour has chosen as its slogan for an intensive campaign to encourage union members to get involved in this spring's provincial election campaign.

Whether its the 25,000 jobs lost in the forestry sector over the past eight years in British Columbia, the notoriety of being the Canadian province with the highest poverty rate, or the dubious distinction of having, effective June 1, 2009, the lowest minimum wage rate in the country, there are important issues that affect us all.

For HSA members, the increasing demands on our strapped health and social services sectors hit us at work as well as at home and in our communities.

On May 12, we will all have an opportunity to make a difference with our vote at the ballot box, but the *Count Me In* campaign is about more than just showing up on election day. Its about taking the time now to get to know the issues, get involved in discussions about alternatives, and talk to family, friends, coworkers and neighbours about the issues that matter in our day to day lives.

HSA has a mandate, created and confirmed regularly by delegates to the unions annual convention, to provide information about political parties position on issues that matter to members of the union ... each and every one of whom is involved in the caring professions. That policy directs the union to provide all HSA members with accurate information on political parties position on critical issues during elections, including ... but not limited to ... health care and other public services, free collective bargaining, employment security, and workers right to strike.

For the past several years, delegates to HSA conventions have led the union into taking an increasingly proactive and activist approach to developing ways for members to get involved in grassroots campaigns as well as the political process.

From supporting progressive organizations such as the BC Health Coalition and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which are raising the level of debate around important social policy and economic issues, to supporting members through education and wage replacement to get involved in grassroots and political campaigns, HSA continues to work to amplify our unions voice and influence.

The BC Federation of Labours Count Me In campaign is being adapted by unions in varying ways ... from

unions who have a mandate from their members to support a particular party and work to support partisan campaigns, to unions like HSA, which has a policy barring endorsement of political parties, but clear direction from the membership to educate members about the issues in election campaigns.

I encourage you to take your responsibility seriously, and take an extra step in your election activity. If you didn't vote in the last election, take that first step and vote. If you voted, take the next step: attend an all candidates meeting and learn more about the issues, or show your support for a group that's organizing around a particular issue, or volunteer a few hours to the candidate that you want to see representing you in the legislature.

Without your participation, your voice cannot count. 

Reid Johnson is president of the Health Sciences Association of BC.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017