

# HSA supports member involvement in grassroots political action

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**THE NUMBER OF HSA MEMBERS** involved in political action around the province has increased exponentially over the last few years. HSA has supported more members than ever before to run for political office, work on election campaigns, and attend a range of different workshops to acquire the knowledge and skills to be involved in elections.

But in addition to electoral politics, HSA members around the province are also increasingly involved in political action at the grassroots level.

Members work on a range of social and labour issues with national, provincial and community organizations. For example, HSA labour council delegates have participated in national MP lobbies coordinated by the Canadian Labour Congress on important work-related issues such as reforming employment insurance and pensions. Other members have worked with community organizations like the BC Health Coalition to protect and improve public health care. Members also work in less formal groups, banding together with neighbours to tackle issues in their communities by establishing food banks or homeless shelters and advocating to improve seniors services.

HSA recognizes the effectiveness of members organizing around these issues to help educate the public and decision makers, and to advocate and lobby for progressive change. Members can apply for support from HSAs Political Action Fund to engage in such grassroots political action, or to obtain training to engage in these activities. Four criteria must be met for an application to be eligible for support:

1. the activity must be nonpartisan;
2. the issue and activity must advance one or more of HSAs constitutional objects and purposes;
3. the issue or activity must be a priority for HSA; and
4. HSA must consider the type of action involved to be appropriate.

Members may apply to work on a variety of labour or social justice issues, such as promoting public health care, community social services, anti-poverty initiatives, a provincial or national child care program, or seniors services.

Support may be available to work on non-partisan campaigns coordinated by affiliated labour organizations, such as NUPGE, the BC Federation of Labour, and the CLC, or campaigns coordinated by progressive, non-partisan community organizations like the BC Health Coalition, Canadian Health Coalition, Council of Canadians, and ACORN.

The types of activities that may be supported include various types of political action (e.g., advocacy, lobbying, organizing, public education), rather than "good works". For example, the political work involved in pressuring

government to act on an anti-poverty initiative such as establishing a homeless shelter may be eligible (e.g., organizing meetings, rallies, petitioning, speaking to elected officials and other decisionmakers), whereas fundraising for, or working at, the shelter would not be eligible. An important objective is to assist members to develop the knowledge, skills and networks to be effective political and community activists. Members may also apply for support to attend action-oriented education to enable them to carry out such work.

Members may apply for wage replacement, as well as the usual expenses covered by HSA to participate in activities, such as travel costs, additional child care, meals and workshop fees. Application forms are available at [hsabc.org](http://hsabc.org) or by contacting Carol Riviere at the HSA office. 

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