

BULLETIN

Taking your stories to Victoria

April 1, 2010

The Report: April 2010 vol.31 num.2

BY CAROL RIVIERE

DO BCS POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES HAVE ANY IDEA who HSA is and what we do? Will they weigh our concerns in balance with those of many other groups who vie for the attention and support of the MLAs who craft the laws we all live by?

Thanks to a dedicated group of HSA volunteers, the answer is "yes."

HSA's Constituency Liaison program began as a pilot project back in 2003. Starting with just six participants, the program has grown to involve 55 members who meet with their MLAs to discuss issues affecting our members working conditions, and the services they provide. Liaisons are currently meeting with their MLAs to stress that the new health science professionals collective agreement must provide the improvements to wages, benefits and working conditions required to recruit and retain more of these professionals to work in BC's public health care system.

An important aspect of each Liaison's work is educating MLAs about the many professions HSA represents, and their critical roles on the health care team. Vikki Tellier, an HSA physiotherapist at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital, decided the best way to demonstrate this was to tour her MLA through the hospital, focusing on areas where health science professionals work. As Tellier worked with hospital management and HSA members in various departments to organize the tour, it quickly expanded. Instead of a tour for just her own MLA, Doug Routley, it eventually involved all of the central Vancouver Island MLAs, including Scott Fraser, and the two MLAs whom HSA respiratory therapist Chris Semrick had been liaising with, Leonard Krog and Ron Cantelon.

The MLAs toured departments where HSA members work, and spoke to several members from a variety of disciplines. Tellier made sure the MLAs realized that many of the staff, whom the MLAs might assume were doctors or nurses, were actually health science professionals.

"We popped up into ICU as a quick and easy way to show the team," she said. "When you look into the Intensive Care Unit you think you're looking at doctors and nurses, but then I pointed out that person is the respiratory therapist, and this person is the physiotherapist and this person is the pharmacist."

The MLAs also gained a personal appreciation of some of the infectious organisms HSA members are exposed to in the workplace.

"When we went to the lab, the supervisor was showing them the petri dishes with bugs growing and explaining what MRSA is," said Tellier. But when one of the technologists showed them a petri dish with actual MRSA growing on it, "They all took a step backwards," laughs Tellier. "And as soon as we left that area and they found one of the hand wash stations, they were all washing their hands. The fact that we were dealing with these bugs all the time was a surprise to them."

Following the tour, the MLAs joined 40 HSA members for coffee and an hour-long informal question and answer session. MLAs asked what our members are looking for in their new contract, and Tellier says members were quick to reply. -We want parity with the nurses. We dont want to be ignored. The nurses cant do their job without us. The doctors cant do their job without us. We have trouble getting people here because we dont train enough people. We try to get people in from Alberta, but our wages are less than in Alberta and other parts of the country. Were losing staff to other locations, were having trouble with recruitment."

Tellier is convinced of the value in HSA members meeting with their elected representatives.

-We tend to be invisible within the hospital," said Tellier. -Everybody knows what a doctor and nurse is. The average person doesnt know what a health science professional is, and the MLAs dont know either. If the government knows who we are, then theres a chance of us actually being recognized for our work." 

Type:

[The Report](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

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