



Meet the RPNs volunteers who beat back the raid

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Surrey Memorial Hospital RPNs Abi Ologani, Tanya Maksymiw and Amanda Farrand

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A year ago, Tanya Maksymiw didn't know a lot about HSA.

In fact, the RPN didn't know a lot about any unions, despite belonging to one union or the other over the last 20 years.

And when HSA staff put on an information meeting on raiding at Surrey Memorial Hospital, she didn't go to get involved.

"I went for the food and bling," she admits with a laugh. "I didn't know anything at that point. I barely knew there were unions trying to raid RPNs and even what that meant."

What she heard at that meeting and the next convinced her that something important was at stake. "I heard about the history of HSA, and what the other unions had done to RPNs, and about what the BCNU/UPN raid would mean for RPNs, and I felt really empowered and educated. It just snowballed from there.

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Maksymiw, along with RPN volunteers at other worksites targeted for raids by the BCNU and UPN, played a huge role in fighting back. Thanks to their efforts, the vast majority of RPNs targeted by the raids will be sticking with HSA. As The Report goes to press, results from votes held around the province show that 83 per cent of the 1052 targeted RPNs will remain HSA members, having effectively rejected the well-funded and misleading campaigns by BCNU and UPN. Votes to determine the future of another 56 HSA RPN members are still pending deliberations by the Labour Relations Board.

"We are grateful for this show of faith by our RPN members," said Val Avery, president of HSA. "The BCNU

and UPN have exhausted considerable efforts to win them over, and it is gratifying to see that RPNs value their long-standing history with HSA. We will not let them down."

"We now call on BCNU and UPN to stop this wasteful raid, work with us to promote the RPNs who are essential to the modern health care system, and bring union benefits and protections to health care professionals who don't already have them."

As a volunteer, Maksymiw spent her time talking with other RPNs, face to face, on the phone, and by text.

"One day I was texting back and forth with a friend from work," explains Maksymiw. "She's very politically aware, much more than me, but she was undecided. So she was texting me all these things that UPN was saying about HSA. I was able to check directly with HSA, and dispell the mistruths with accurate information."

"There was so much BS coming from UPN, and going around on Facebook. It really riled me up."

Maksymiw says these misleading tactics, contrasted with the honesty of HSA, convinced her and a lot of RPNs she talked to about the importance of sticking with HSA.

"I was very impressed by the commitment, the passion and the professionalism of HSA. They seemed to care about us as RPNs and as individuals. With HSA there is the history, the expertise and the resources to help RPNs. They maintained professionalism throughout, whereas the other unions used a lot of shady tactics."

Maksymiw is just one of many RPNs who stepped up. Others include Dean Avender (Vernon), Val Barker (Lions Gate Hospital), Tonia Cherris (Royal Jubilee), Shirley Clakrson (St. Paul's Hospital), Janice Clements (Cowichan Hospital), Gwen DeRosa (Columbia View Lodge), Mia Durkovich (Ridge Meadows), Lisa Kennedy (Cowichan Hospital), Nicole McIntosh (Mt. St. Joseph's), Jenny Oriss (Royal Inland Hospital), Genelle Sandberg (St. Paul's Hospital), and Deborah States (Ridge Meadows/Abbotsford).

RPNs were one of the founding professions of HSA over four decades ago, and over the years HSA has fought to advance the profession, sometimes against BCNU, who on a number of occasions has attempted to limit career options for RPNs.

"Not long ago BCNU fought to keep RPN bargaining proposals off the negotiating table within the Nurses Bargaining Association", explained Avery. "It was a blatant attempt to eliminate concerns important to RPNs, and HSA fought back, winning the right for RPNs to have their priorities heard in bargaining. At the workplace, BCNU fought to eliminate RPN job postings -- arguing that any nurse could fill psychiatric nurse jobs. HSA successfully fought this bullying tactic, and secured the right for RPNs to preserve specialized job postings."

Maksymiw says she's ready for a rematch. She's a steward now - one of HSA's many RPN stewards - and if another raid is attempted, she's ready to speak out.

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