

BULLETIN

## Delegates approve increase in dues to protect services and members

May 12, 2016

Confronted with increasing demand for member services, support for stewards facing growing caseloads and the mounting cost of defending members against hostile raids by the BC Nurses, delegates to HSA's 45th annual convention voted overwhelmingly in favour of a small dues increase, the first in 19 years.

Almost 300 delegates, each elected by local members, debated and ultimately supported plans to increase services and support to members and a new package of technological tools to help stewards streamline processes and reduce waiting time for union services like assistance with long-term disability and grievances. The increase in dues from 1.60% to 1.85% of gross pay will be effective July 15, 2016. This will bring HSA dues rates in line with BCGEU, and still at a lower rate than HEU (2.1%) and BC Nurses (2%).

For members earning \$20,000, the increase amounts to about \$1.90 per pay cheque; if you earn \$40,000, it is about \$3.80 per paycheque, and if you earn \$60,000, about \$5.75 per pay cheque. Union dues are tax deductible.

President Val Avery thanked delegates for supporting the Board of Directors' proposal for the first increase in dues since 1997.

"A lot has changed in 19 years," said Avery. "Labour relations has become more professionalized and more complex. The number of members asking the union for help with appeals, grievances, arbitrations and legal matters is growing every year. We face governments determined to reduce our pay, cut our benefits and impoverish public health care and community social services. And we face relentless attacks from a union using the dues of hard-working nurses to poach our members and undermine the solidarity of the modern health care team."

"A smaller, weaker union is not the answer to these challenges. It's time to adapt, as we have in the past, and become a stronger, more engaged union, with the flexibility to fight on many fronts."

Delegates also approved three extraordinary resolutions:

A donation of \$5,000 to the Canadian Red Cross - to be matched by the federal government - to support Alberta residents affected by the devastating Fort McMurray wildfire. HSA Alberta members were among the health care workers who worked to evacuate patients from the local hospital, making difficult choices about whether to be with patients or their families.

Kat Lanteigne of Bloodwatch Canada addressed the convention about an emerging issue related to paid blood donations, as companies are seeking to establish pay-for-plasma clinics. In Canada, only two provinces have specifically forbidden paying for plasma, this in spite of the recommendation from the Krever Inquiry that blood donation protected as a not for profit public resource following the tainted blood scandal that affected more than 30,000 Canadians when they were infected with HIV and hepatitis C due to contaminated blood and blood products. Delegates unanimously passed a resolution committing HSA to work to urge the BC government to ban all paid-blood product donations, and for the federal government to legislate a national ban on all paid-

blood product donations.

Delegates also passed a resolution directing the union to defend members from hostile takeover attempts through raiding. A task force has been struck to facilitate member involvement in continued organizing of the health and community social services professionals HSA represents.

Following the convention, the Board of Directors elected the executive members of the union, returning Janice Morrison (physiotherapist, Kootenay Lake Hospital) as vice president, and John Christopherson (social worker, BC Cancer Agency) as secretary-treasurer.

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180 East Columbia  
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website  
[www.hsabc.org](http://www.hsabc.org)

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