



BULLETIN

Status quo is not an option

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BY VAL AVERY, PRESIDENT, HSA

We're hearing a lot of interesting things from members like you.

Over the summer, HSA circulated several surveys and invited members to participate in focus groups. Each explored different challenges and opportunities facing our union, and we'll be following up this fall with additional surveys, worksite visits and the annual regional meetings. It's all part of our commitment to giving members a greater say and a bigger role in charting our course.

Members tell us that when there's a problem, they know HSA will be there for them, and that most times these problems are sorted out quickly. But not every time. There is some frustration about the length of time it can take to settle grievances. Stewards have been saying that same thing. And while delays are often due to lack of action on the employer end, we're working on a new plan to provide stewards with powerful new on line tools that will make their work easier, and help clear up the backlog of grievances.

Members believe strongly in HSA's work as the voice of specialized professionals in health care and social services, but they want the public to know more about their role. They believe - and I agree - that a greater public profile will help us build a stronger union, with greater leverage to deal with the workload and wage problems that drive so many of the problems in BC's health care and community social services. That's why we're ramping up our advertising with an emotional new ad that shows how shortages of health science professionals are affecting our patients. Look for it in October.

Members are dedicated to their work, but they're frustrated with workloads that have become dangerous. That's why we're going to focus on this problem over the next few months, giving members opportunities to work together and put more pressure on employers to stop ignoring this growing problem.

But I am struck by something else we are hearing. Many members feel that they really don't know enough about their union. That unless there's a problem, they don't have much contact.

That's something we need to change, and we will. Our new local leadership training program will play a big part by giving members the tools they need to organize their colleagues and work as a team to build a better worksite. But it also starts with these surveys. By giving members more opportunities to share their concerns with us, we've also inspired them to get more involved. Just one of our surveys identified more than 500 members who want to be stewards, help organize meetings and find other ways to play a bigger role in HSA.

Members are proud of this union, but they also want change. I think that's a smart response to a changing world, and I look forward to making it happen. Working together, we have a very bright future.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

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