

BULLETIN

Want to help bring change to BC?

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There are a lot of good reasons to get involved in an election campaign.

Many members decide to work on an election campaign because they belong to a political party, or get inspired by the party leader. Lexie Mercier, a health information management professional at the BC Cancer Agency, had a more personal reason.

Lexie's brother Andrew was the NDP candidate in Langley in the 2013 provincial election, and she wanted to help with his campaign. In fact, the campaign turned into a family affair, with their sister and Andrew's wife – girlfriend at the time – also working full-time on the campaign, along with their brother and parents coming in to help whenever they could.

When Andrew ran into an HSA staff member at an event and mentioned that his sister Lexie was an HSA member, he learned that she could apply to HSA's Political Action Fund for union-paid time to work on his campaign. Lexie followed up, and was able to take four weeks of paid time off work to serve as the office manager for the campaign.

"I did a lot of the housekeeping, kept the coffee going, answered the phone and greeted walk-ins," says Lexie. "I also called volunteers to bring them in to do door-to-door shifts to talk with constituents in the riding, or set them up to make phone calls."

"I had no experience working on an election before this, so really learned a lot about what goes into making something like this happen. It is a lot of work to go out and talk to people, to know what to say and how to answer their questions. I learned about electoral districts, polling, and also the fine details of what goes into the actual Election Day."

As with any campaign, there were difficult times as well.

"Thankfully I had a background in retail, so I was able to use my people skills as sometimes we had very upset or angry people walk through the door wanting help with various issues," says Lexie. "I learned to assess what I could take care of on my own and what needed to be handed off to someone higher up in the office."

"And it did get stressful towards the end and was quite upsetting when Andrew unfortunately lost. However, he managed to do very well in a very non-NDP riding."

"Overall, it was a lot of fun. Since I was working for my brother, it was great to go through this with my family. We had a very young group with lots of energy and great ideas, and I made a lot of new friends that month. It was lovely."

"I think everyone should get involved at least once. It's important to make our voices heard and the people running for those positions always need help."

WANT TO HELP BRING CHANGE TO BC?

In May 2017 HSA members like you can help elect a candidate, support the labour movement's campaign to highlight issues of importance to working people and elect progressive candidates, or work on the BC Health Coalition's campaign to make public health care a vote-determining issue.

HSA can connect you with the campaign on which you want to work, and help you get the training you need to be as effective as possible. Members can apply for Political Action Fund support to work on campaigns and to attend training.

Many organizations offer campaign training, including political parties, Organize BC, the Canadian Women's Voters Congress and HSA itself.

Here's what HSA members said about HSA's recent Election Campaign School:

"This was a great course. I learned so much and feel like I can (and should) seek out a bigger role in supporting campaigns I care about."

"How fascinating and interesting. I had no idea of the workings of a campaign. Canvassing was good. Initially not interested in face to face, but now I'm OK to try it."

"Above and beyond all expectations. Most useful/beneficial course I've taken to date. Learned a great deal about the political landscape."

"I learned there are many avenues for support and opportunities to get involved. And having discussion with an MLA in the room brought the theory to life."

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