

BULLETIN

## Balanced government: will it affect upcoming contract negotiations?

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In May 17, British Columbians sent a strong message that they want a balanced approach to government.

With 46 Liberal and 33 NDP MLAs representing us for the next four years, the Liberal government will be working with a much different mandate than British Columbians delivered four years ago.

At HSAs 2005 convention, delegates had a thorough discussion about HSAs political action strategy. Delegates agreed that the unions Political Action Committee is on the right track, and gave clear direction to the Board of Directors to continue to engage in the political process to make every effort to ensure that HSAs issues and concerns are addressed by government. Convention resolutions directed the union to build on the successful Constituency Liaison project, which matches HSA members with MLAs to educate our representatives about the issues HSA members deal with and are important to them.

Thanks to the work of the Constituency Liaisons, many government MLAs have a new awareness about shortages in the health science professions, and a better understanding about the concerns that HSA members have about the services you deliver. The job for the Constituency Liaisons and Political Action Committee will be to build on the work of the past two years and ensure our representatives are aware of the issues important to HSA and our members.

This work will be particularly important in the coming few months as we turn our concerted attention to negotiating new collective agreements. The current health care and social services collective agreements all expire in 2006, and there are a number of issues that members will be seeking to raise at the bargaining table.

Actions that ensure the decision-makers understand your concerns will be complementary to the work that is done in identifying bargaining proposals and finalizing a package to take to the negotiating table. The work of our Constituency Liaisons ... and, indeed, all HSA members ... in raising awareness about the issues important to you will be critical to achieving success in this round of negotiations.

With a strong opposition in Victoria, there will be much more opportunity to hold the government to account for its actions, and part of the work for HSA will be to find ways to work with the government and the opposition to ensure that your interests are heard and understood. 

*Cindy Stewart is president of the Health Sciences Association of BC.*

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