

BULLETIN

Convention 2014

June 20, 2014

HSA REPORT, jUNE 2014

Over 300 delegates from around the province gathered in April to vote overwhelmingly in favour of continuing the fight to defend public health care, the work of the Committee on Equality and Social Action, and to work to protect and improve services for patients and clients who count on the health care and community social services HSA members deliver.

"Time and again, members spoke about the need to speak up for those who don't have a voice," said HSA President Val Avery. "The resolutions, and the debate over each of them, all fundamentally addressed the need to back our words with concrete action."

Delegates elected Avery president in a contest against one other candidate, Joe Sebastian.

"Now it's time to put the commitment of our delegates into action" she explained. "It starts with the development of a strategic plan for the future of our union, a plan that calls for the participation of all members. And it begins with the regional conferences this fall."

IN DEFENCE OF CESA

The activities of the Committee on Equality and Social Action inspired some of the most impassioned debate.

The HSA operations budget for 2014-15 had proposed temporarily suspending CESA funding to help make up for the increased cost of recent bargaining, the successful defense of RPN members against a raid by two other unions, and the increased complexity and volume of member servicing needs. Delegates were very concerned about this, and many spoke in support of a resolution to continue to fund CESA.

The debate touched on a number of important issues, exploring the HSA's commitment to community advocacy and the many social action groups funded by CESA. Delegates considered raising dues on members to pay for CESA funding, and after much thoughtful debate, delegates chose overwhelmingly to support the resolution to fund CESA without raising member dues. The debate has sparked a valuable conversation about how the union can continue this work, a conversation that will continue in the committees and in the workplace.

ACTION TO STOP ATTACKS ON WORKING PEOPLE

Another key resolution spoke to the sustained and unprecedented attack on labour unions by several levels of government in Canada.

Responding specifically to so-called "right to work" laws which would permit dues evasion by members who want to benefit from union contracts without paying their share of dues, the resolution cited the experience of US states where such laws have resulted in lower wages, reduced benefits and gutted pensions for all working people, not just union members. Delegates voted in favour of the resolution to work with the National Union of Public and General Employees and the Canadian Labour Congress to protect labour rights and make the federal Conservative government's attack on them a key issue in the 2015 election.

HSA plans to take action on this by supporting the All Together Now campaign to defend public services by NUPGE and the CLC's Together Fairness Works campaign to raise awareness of how communities benefit from unionization. Later this summer, HSA will take part in NUPGE's Fairness Express, a big green bus travelling across the country to get people talking and tweeting about income inequality.

WE DON'T RAID. WE ORGANIZE.

HSA has successfully defended RPN members against a well-funded and misleading raid campaign by the BC Nurses' Union and the Union of Psychiatric Nurses, and it's expected they will try again this fall. As a result, delegates were enthusiastically supportive of a resolution reiterating that the practice of raiding undermines the labour movement's objectives of building trust, co-operation and solidarity, that HSA does not condone raiding, and will vigorously defend against any attempt by another union to raid members of HSA.

SOMEONE HAS TO STAND UP FOR OUR HEALTH CARE

With public health care in Canada facing a serious legal challenge, the federal Conservative government's refusal to enforce the Canada Health Act, set national standards for essential programs or even negotiate a new Health Accord with the provinces is especially concerning.

A resolution to work with allied organizations to make these issues a big part of the 2015 federal election pointed out that polling indicates that voters want the federal government to play a strong role in ensuring the quality of our health care. Delegates voted in favour, and HSA will continue to work with our national affiliates and groups like the BC Health Coalition to prevent the Harper government from destroying the health care system we all depend on.

RESOLUTIONS REFERRED

Debate on many resolutions was vigorous, and time ran out before a number of resolutions could make it to the floor for debate. As per the HSA constitution, delegates referred these resolutions to the Board of Directors for consideration at their first regular meeting following convention. The directors met on May 15, considered the resolutions, and reported to all delegates and HSA stewards on the outcome of the deliberations. Contact your steward if you'd like to know all the details.

ON LINE COVERAGE

HSA posted updates throughout convention on Facebook and Twitter (#HSA2014). For more information, including photos and quotes from guest speakers and committee presentations, see facebook.com/hsabc (you don't need a Facebook account to view) or twitter.com/hsabc.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Guest speakers included Sarah Laslett from the Washington State Labor Education and Research Center; Larry Brown, Secretary Treasurer of the National Union of Public and General Employees; Jim Sinclair, President of the BC Federation of Labour; and Amber Hockin from the Pacific Region of the Canadian Labour Congress.

2014 DAVID BLAND AWARD

HSA established the David Bland Memorial Award in 2007 to celebrate our local activists in occupational health and safety.

HSA member David Bland was a vocational counsellor who worked at Richmond Mental Health Services. At the end of an otherwise ordinary workday in January of 2005, as David left his workplace and walked to his car, a former client was waiting in the parking lot - and fatally stabbed David. The events of that day sent shock waves through the industry and exposed the reality of how our workplaces, while usually places of comfort and care, can also be violent.

To honour David Bland's memory, the union established the David Bland Memorial Award in 2007 to celebrate

our local activists in occupational health and safety. With this award, we honour the important work that members undertake as advocates for their colleagues in ensuring we all work in a safe environment.

This year, the award was presented to Heather Sapergia, a medical laboratory technologist at the University Hospital of Northern BC in Prince George, outgoing Region 10 Director, and member of the HSA occupational health and safety committee.

Heather has been an HSA activist for many years and has played key roles in all levels of the union including time spent as a general steward, OHS steward, and chief steward. Heather has been active with many HSA committees, has served as a labour council delegate, a constituency liaison and since 2008 Heather has been the HSA Director for Region 10.

Her efforts in support of safer workplaces has helped maintain the HSA's reputation as a leader in health and safety among healthcare unions in BC.

Heather Sapergia has dedicated a large part of her life to making all of our workplaces safer and because of that commitment, HSA is honoured to recognize her with the 2014 David Bland award.

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