



BULLETIN

## Unique but united: HSA Convention 2015

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Acknowledging the diversity of HSA members and the issues they care about, HSA President Val Avery opened the convention with a report on how the board of directors, committees and activists must daily strive to balance demands and goals.

"We represent a hundred different professions," said Avery. "But those differences don't divide us - they make us stronger. We are diverse, but not divided; we are unique but we are united. And we have proven over the last year that success is possible."

#### DELEGATES RE-ELECT AVERY TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT

Three candidates stood in presidential elections this year: Region 2 Director Derrick Hoyt, Region 4 Director Joseph Sebastian, and incumbent president Val Avery. Candidates took questions from delegates during a town hall session prior to the main plenary session, spoke individually with candidates throughout the convention and heard closing speeches from each just prior to voting on May 2. Val Avery won a majority of votes on the first ballot.

"HSA is the union that has the ability to do great things," Avery told delegates after her election. "Our membership is comprised of highly educated, thoughtful, and articulate professionals. With the support and expertise of our staff we can take on challenges and we can be successful."

"I am grateful you have given me your trust and confidence, and I pledge to earn it every day as we make the changes needed to build a stronger union in challenging times."

The position of president has a term of two years. Following the convention the Board of Directors elected Janice Morrison to serve as vice president and John Christopherson as secretary-treasurer.

#### 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Avery provided delegates with a special presentation on HSA's new strategic plan for 2020. The plan, which will guide the activities of the union for the next five years, resulted from extensive consultations involving interviews with members and board members, staff and activists and an online survey opened to all members in September and October 2014.

"A little over a year ago, I asked our Board of Directors to begin a thorough strategic planning process," said Avery. "We listened to members like you, we took direction from you, and we identified goals to serve your needs and keep your board focused and on track."

During the presentation, Avery said the plan would set the course for work in several distinct areas including service and rights, engagement and relationships, and resources.

"Critical to this plan is the role of stewards," said Avery. "These are the women and men who step forward to

volunteer their time, energy, skills and compassion to support their colleagues in the workplace.

"I know what it's like - the long hours, the complexity of labour relations issues. But being a steward often requires so much more of us. Sometimes, nothing can prepare you for some of the calls you get. When I was a steward, I remember a late night call from the Employer requesting my assistance. One of my members was suicidal. I had no idea what I could do but I went to the worksite and ensured that member got the help she needed."

Delegates offered a number of questions and comments following the presentation.

A full copy of the 2020 Strategic Plan document has been posted at <http://www.hsabc.org/about/2020-strategic-plan>

## **GUESTS PLEDGE SUPPORT AGAINST RPN RAIDS**

"She's determined. She's smart and experienced. And - she is the very first woman ever elected as president of the BC Federation of Labour," Avery said as she introduced Irene Lanzinger to a standing ovation.

"We are completely behind you in fighting the predatory practices of the BC Nurses' Union," declared Langzinger, who also lauded HSA's contribution to reducing workplace violence in the health care system and helping add momentum to the movement for a significant increase in BC's minimum wage.

"Is it OK if I use the word pathetic?" asked Lanzinger, looking for some way to describe the BC government's recent increase to the minimum wage.

Canadian Labour Congress president Hassan Yussuf - the first person of colour to hold the office - received a warm welcome and spoke to delegates about national efforts to defend public health care against legal attacks, support the call to deal with growing income inequality, and protect the labour movement from hostile government legislation.

Referring to the recent Labour Relations Board ruling that BCNU organizers had placed both nurses and patients at risk through raiding activities, Yussuf assured delegates that the CLC would help confront raiding activity that puts members at risk and drains resources at a time when unions face serious challenges from outside groups.

"Raiding is fundamentally wrong and it has to be confronted," he said.

## **DEBATE ON KEY RESOLUTIONS**

Members from chapters across the province submitted over 60 resolutions for action on everything from raising union dues to lobbying governments for action on child care. Delegates debated all but four of them, and these have been referred for consideration by the Board of Directors.

Many resolutions, and much debate, focused on proposals to provide more support to stewards; specific measures proposed included paid time, office space, phone and internet access and computer equipment like laptops, printers and scanners. While there was widespread agreement that stewards could use more support, many delegates expressed concerns over costs and so while many of the individual resolutions were defeated delegates agreed to establish a task force to investigate and report back on the greatest needs, best solutions and cost implications.

A resolution calling for member dues to increase from 1.6 per cent to 1.65 per cent was defeated after considerable debate. Proponents suggested the increase was needed to deal with greater demands on servicing members, supporting stewards and defending registered psychiatric nursing members against raiding; those opposed, while agreeing these issues are important, were concerned that any increase in dues requires a more specific plan for deploying the revenue to help members.

Several resolutions called for efforts to defend health care and lobby the government for more support for community social services, and HSA will be guided by these as plans for campaigns, collaborations with other groups and government relations strategy are mapped out.

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