

# THE Report

**GETTING ACTIVE**  
POLITICAL ACTION 2005



# Rolling up our sleeves for contract negotiations

by CINDY STEWART

**T**his fall marks the concerted start of preparations for bargaining, as almost every HSA member's collective agreements will be expiring next spring. Contracts for Paramedical Professionals, Nurses, Community Health and Community Social Services all expire at the end of March 2006.

And those are not the only contracts that will be up for renewal. Government workers and teachers will also be in at the table to secure new collective agreements – all of which makes for a very crowded bargaining scene.

Preparations for 2006 public sector discussions are set against the current backdrop of a number of high-profile labour disputes. Members of the TWU have been locked out by their employer, Telus, for more than a month, with contracting out being a key issue. Negotiations between striking Steelworkers and Teck Cominco in Trail are deadlocked as the company demands concessions on pensions and post-retirement benefits; and CBC workers were locked out in August as the public broadcaster pushes for increased contracting out of work.

HSA members face many of the same issues.

In health care, the government has put in place legislation that allows for contracting out of many services. While the initial impact on health care has largely been the contracting out of nutrition and cleaning services, the legislation has the potential for a wider application. Members, along with the public, have expressed legitimate con-

cerns about the effects of the current level of contracting out as hardly a week goes by that you don't hear about the deteriorating quality of food and cleanliness in our hospitals. HSA members have been dealing with the effects first hand and have often found themselves in the role of advocates for patients and their families.

In community health and community social services, where agencies are responsible for delivering services funded by the government, members are experiencing uncertainty as agencies struggle to juggle fiscal demands of the government and client needs, opting in some instances to drop programs they can no longer afford to deliver – leaving clients with no place to turn, and the workers they rely on without work.

In both sectors, the level of frustration and tension as well as increasing workload has also led to increased experiences with and concerns about violence and injury in the workplace.

Your experiences in the workplace will be the key to informing the priorities of your bargaining committees and for most members that work begins in earnest this fall. For registered psychiatric nurses, the work began with the election of a focus



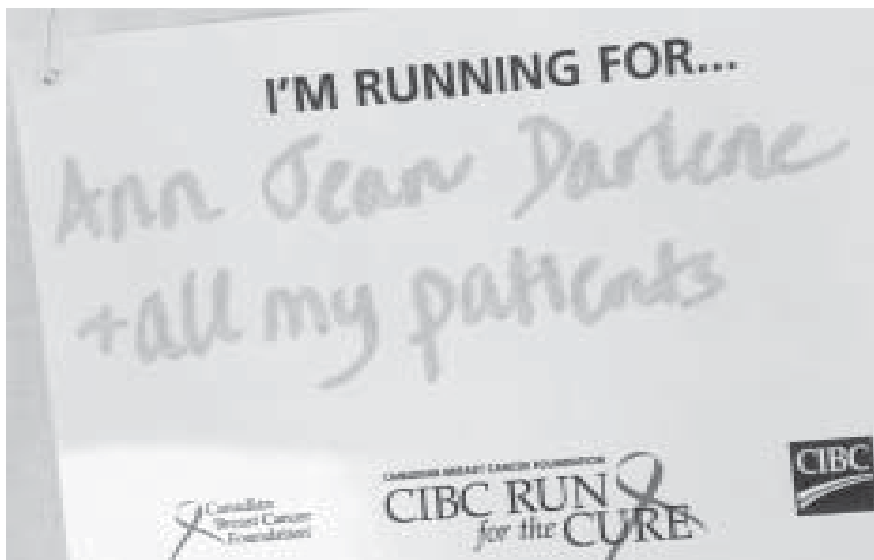
**Cindy Stewart, HSA President**

group and bargaining representatives at the 2005 Annual Convention. Work is already under way to identify bargaining priorities for members in the community social services and community health support. For paramedical professionals, delegates attending this year's regional meetings will select representatives to attend the bargaining proposal conference which will be scheduled later this year.

And, in addition, education courses with a focus on preparing for bargaining will be held in conjunction with the Regional Meetings. Topics will include writing bargaining proposals, media training, and building awareness of your issues in your community.

Bargaining collective agreements takes a lot of preparation. The negotiations that take part at the table are just the finished product of many months of work on the part of many, including you! We're well on our way to getting ready for this next round of contract talks. **R**

*Cindy Stewart is President of the Health Sciences Association of BC*



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#### THE FRONT COVER

Anne Kindrachuk is an Occupational Therapist at the Louis Brier Home and Hospital in Vancouver. She is pictured working with resident Zev Klein.

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# News



## **CLC vows to protect and improve key public services**

Delegates to the 24th Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress held in Montreal this summer want to make Canada's public health care system, and the women and men who operate it, a national priority for the labour movement."

The need to ensure the public system provides timely access to quality health care for all Canadians is underlined by the recent Supreme Court decision on *Chaoulli*," said Elisabeth Ballermann, President of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta.

"The steps we need to take to do that remain the same as they have always been – to promote innovation and accountability, to reject privatization and to invest in the most important part of the system, the people who provide care," added Cindy Stewart,

**"We need to take steps to promote innovation and accountability, to reject privatization and to invest in the most important part of the system, the people who provide care."**

President of the Health Sciences Association of British Columbia.

Ballermann and Stewart are both members of the Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS).

The Secretariat represents 60,000 health science professionals in more than 100 different disciplines who provide the diagnostic, clinical and rehabilitation services essential to the health care team and to quality patient care.

While progress has been made in addressing the shortages of doctors and nurses, little has been done about the growing shortage of health science professionals. This health human resources gap has the

potential to erode all the gains that have been made so far in reducing wait times and improving access.

Congress delegates called for action on international trade and investment agreements that threaten Canada's publicly funded and delivered system, and committed to press the government to include community and home based health care in the Canada Health Act.

Delegates also called on the federal government to introduce a national pharmacare program to make necessary medications available to all Canadians, and to address what is far and away the biggest cost pressure in the current system – pharmaceuticals.

"Canadians overwhelmingly support a single tier, publicly-funded and publicly-delivered health care system based on the principles of the Canada Health Act. The challenge now is to protect and enhance that system," Ballermann said.

CLC delegates also unanimously supported a resolution calling on the CLC to continue its campaign and lobbying efforts to make a national public child care system a reality. The 2005 federal budget was finally passed on Tuesday, guaranteeing the first installment of the \$5 billion for the program.

"Here in Quebec is the child care model for Canada," says Libby Simpson, a child care worker from Ontario, and member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. "We must continue to pressure our MPs to prevent the movement of money into for-profit child care," she said.

The plight of child care workers was also of first importance. "The labour movement must stand behind child care workers in their struggle to unionize," adds Stephanie Seaman, an activist and child care worker for the BC Government Employees' Union.

"The work we do is extremely valuable and we deserve adequate wages, appropriate working conditions and respect from employers," she says. "How we value child care workers reflects how we value our children, our future."

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## Leaders must reassure Canadians about medicare's future

The 340,000-member National Union of Public and General Employees is disappointed with the recent Supreme Court decision in the Chaoulli case on health care and is calling on governments to act immediately to assure Canadians that public medicare will be protected.

"While this decision relates to Quebec it's essential the federal and provincial leaders immediately reassure Canadians that their public health care system will be protected," said NUPGE president James Clancy.

"In particular, it's essential the federal government assure all Canadians that the Canada Health Act is still the law of the land and that the five principles of public medicare remain in effect and will be enforced."

Dr. Jacques Chaoulli and his patient George Zeliotis argued that waiting for care in the provincially-insured health care system in Quebec, and the laws that govern care in that province, are a violation of their rights under the Quebec Charter of Rights.

Specifically, they asked the Supreme Court to strike down sections of the Quebec Hospital Insurance Act that prevent people from buying private health insurance for medical procedures covered by the public health plan.

The National Union had intervenor status during the case and argued that a decision to strike down sections of the Quebec legislation would lead to a two-tier system that would not relieve pressure on the public system. Instead, it would exacerbate problems of long wait times for certain services, NUPGE argued.

In its ruling, the court said provincial policy violates the Quebec charter, but it found that it does not violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This means that, for the moment, the decision has no immediate impact on the Canadian health

**"First, the province should strengthen their legislative framework to prohibit private medical insurance and care. Second, it should reduce wait times in the public system."**

care system as a whole.

"We disagree with the Supreme Court of Canada's decision about the Quebec situation," Clancy said.

"Having said that, we believe the Quebec government must react and should take two steps in reaction to this regrettable decision.

"First, the province should strengthen their legislative framework to prohibit private medical insurance and care. Second, it should build on the recent First Minister's agreements, and the recommendations contained in the Romanow report, to reduce wait times in the public system," Clancy added.

"It's important to remember that the case brought forward by Dr. Chaoulli and Mr. Zeliotis dates from 1997. Since that time there's been a Royal Commission investigation and two First Ministers agreements on health care that have addressed the concern of wait times, which was the primary issue before the Supreme Court.

"Canadians have repeatedly stated that they want to strengthen and expand the public system, which provides care based on need rather than ability to pay. They do not want a system that works the other way around," Clancy said.

"So the first thing governments should do today is reaffirm their commitment to the public system and reassure Canadians they have a plan to make the public system stronger and better for all Canadians." **R**

*HSA is an affiliate of the National Union of Public and General Employees.*

# HSA members hit the campaign trail

**H**SA members are increasingly making the connection between the caliber of the politicians they elect, and the quality of services they are able to provide, as well as the quality of their own experiences at work.

As a result, members at the 2004 Convention directed HSA to increase and broaden the support the union provides to members who are working on election campaigns or running for elected office. Convention delegates passed resolutions increasing the amount of HSA's Political Action Fund for 2005, increasing the amount of financial support members could receive to run as a candidate or work on a campaign, and authorizing HSA to use some of the Fund to support members attending non-partisan campaign schools.

In the year leading up to the May 2005 provincial election, HSA worked hard to provide members with opportunities to learn more about electoral politics, and to develop the skills they would need to participate in election campaigns. HSA supported members attending campaign schools offered by the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Women Voters Congress.

HSA also offered, for the first time, its own non-partisan campaign school. This proved so popular with members that HSA offered three campaign workshops during the six months prior to the election.

In January 2005, HSA began encouraging members to apply for union-paid leave to work on election campaigns that met HSA's criteria, which require that both the candidate and political party involved support:

1. a positive role for the public sector;
2. the principles set out in the *Canada Health Act*;
3. free collective bargaining for public sector employees; and
4. progressive legislation on occupational health and safety.

Between January, and the start of the provincial election period, more than 20 HSA members enquired about, or applied for, union-paid leaves ranging from one to 20 days, to work on provincial election campaigns around the province and for candidates running for three different parties.

These members, and many others, also volunteered countless hours on these campaigns, doing everything from cleaning the campaign office bathroom to managing their party's province-wide campaign. Here are a few of their stories.

**Joan Magee**, Region 8 Director and PAC member



who works as a Medical Laboratory Technologist, helped elect two new MLAs: one in her home constituency of Cariboo North, the other in neighbouring Cariboo South.

"I worked in a Williams Lake campaign office that served as the local headquarters for both the Cariboo North

and Cariboo South campaigns for my party. I provided the campaign manager for the Cariboo South campaign with a place to stay during the campaign, and was named "E-Day" organizer for the Cariboo North campaign five days before Election Day, with the job of ensuring that all our supporters actually got out to vote. I did everything from organizing the inside and outside scrutineers, to roasting the beef for the victory party."

“I also saw first-hand that ‘every vote counts.’ Shortly before the polls were scheduled to close in Cariboo South, one of the outside scrutineers walked up to a supporter’s home, only to find that he wasn’t planning to go vote because he was in the middle of painting his porch. The outside scrutineer persuaded the voter to let him finish the painting, while the supporter went to vote. Later that evening, the media announced that the new Cariboo South MLA had won by a single vote!”

“I urge all HSA members to get involved in an election campaign. Financial donations and volunteers are always badly needed. There’s a job for everyone - and you don’t have to be a political junkie to make a valuable contribution. It’s a lot of fun to work with like-minded people with a common cause, and it’s a great way to make new friends.”

“You also get to know the candidate very well. As one of HSA’s Constituency Liaisons, it will now be very easy to go talk to my MLA about issues of concern to HSA and our members.”

**Maria Tokarchuk**, a Registered Psychiatric Nurse



and HSA Labour Council delegate, worked full-time on a campaign in Kelowna-Mission.

“It was a great experience to work on the campaign. We didn’t win but we had fun trying and increased the vote substantially and gave the incumbent MLA a run for her seat.”

“I was on the Election Planning Committee, and during the campaign, I was the office manager. I must have worked 250 to 300 hours in the four weeks. Basically I lived and breathed the “campaign.” I had to organize the office, have volunteers available to staff it, and have the information/paper flow system set up. I also helped with organizing volun-

**“The outside scrutineer persuaded the voter to let him finish the painting, while the supporter went to vote. Later that evening, the media announced that the new Cariboo South MLA had won by a single vote!”**

teers for phoning, literature drops and E-Day. I also did some lit drops and phoning myself. I learned how a campaign works and the various jobs involved. I was fortunate to work with a campaign manager who has a background in communications and learned about dealing with the media.”

“I also felt I was trying to make a difference to rid the political scene of a government whose policies and decisions have made my work life more and more difficult on a daily basis. HSA should continue with its Political Action Fund and if possible, increase the amount available to enable more members to work on campaigns. Also keep getting the information out in *The Report* and regional meetings and other methods about the importance of getting involved.”

“It was a gratifying experience and I really appreciate HSA making it available to me.”

**Mandi Ayers**, an HSA activist who works as a Medical Laboratory Technologist, worked full-time as the Voter Contact Coordinator/Volunteer Recruiter in Bulkley Valley-Stikine.

“My job included recruiting and training canvassers and other volunteers, coordinating door-to-door and phone canvasses, reviewing and following up canvass sheets and mail-outs.”

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## HSA members hit the campaign trail



**Mandi Ayers**

communities. I have never been this involved in a campaign before and my duties required that I challenge myself by stepping out of my comfort zone. By facing things that challenged me, I received a great deal of satisfaction from my time on the campaign.”

“I think the union has been very encouraging to members who wanted to help out. I think the campaign schools are a very important start and the union should consider giving them regionally.”

“I also think that HSA members should become involved because they are advocates for the public, and trying to ensure that you get good representation in Victoria is where your advocacy should start.”

“I cannot express how much I thank HSA for the opportunity. It was an extraordinary experience of a lifetime. Financially, I would not have been able to participate to the extent that I did without the un-

“I learned how much work is involved in an election campaign. How much it costs to run a campaign. How many people are afraid to become politically active. How frustrating it can be to find volunteers. How much fun it can be. I met some fantastic people from my home community and other

ion-paid leave. Although the outcome of the election in our constituency was not as I had hoped, I feel that we achieved so much.”

“I plan on continuing with my political activism and now sit on our constituency association executive. I look forward to the federal election – although not too soon! And our constituency association is already planning for 2009.”

**Susan Richings**, a Social Worker, and HSA’s Con-



stituency Liaison for Saanich South, played an important role in a campaign that elected the Opposition’s new Health Critic.

“I put in unlimited hours on the campaign. During the two years prior to the actual election campaign, I was phoning past support-

ers to inform them of constituency activities, update memberships, and solicit donations. I worked full time on the election campaign itself, and after the campaign was over, I used two vacation days to dismantle the campaign office.”

“I worked on many aspects of the campaign, but my primary role was coordinating voter contact (identifying supporters) by phone and door to door. I spent most of my time determining our strategy for voter contact, identifying priority polls, putting kits together, and processing the results as volunteers made calls or door knocked. I also organized the volunteer training for polling, organized sign deliveries, recruited volunteers and helped coordinate literature drops. I did data entry and some polling personally. I was a poll captain on election day, supporting a number of scrutineers as they

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**“In our riding, victory came from three to four more votes per poll. We got those votes out through multiple phone calls, door step chats, and personal leaflet delivery.”**

tracked which of our supporters had voted and monitored the ballot count at the end of the day.”

“I think my union-paid leave made a significant difference to the campaign, because it allowed me to be there all the time, so I knew everything going on, and could step in anywhere needed. The funded leave is crucial to get more members out to work on campaigns. Who has the energy to do campaign work after eight to 12 hours a day in a hospital? Our jobs are as demanding and exhausting as it gets.”

“What I learned from the campaign was that people are looking for hope and encouragement, and a sense of being part of something bigger than themselves. There was a lot of love in that campaign office, and tremendous dedication to the cause. In our riding, victory came from three to four more votes per poll. We got those votes out through multiple phone calls, door step chats, and personal leaflet delivery.”

“One of the most interesting experiences I had in this campaign was meeting so many people from my neighbourhood – even the campaign manager, who lives across the street from my mother (we always wondered who lived there). The media works non-stop to make us all feel isolated, outnumbered,



**Allen Peters**, an HSA activist and Medical Radiation Technologist, volunteered on a campaign that elected a new MLA in Yale-Lillooet.

“I had never really worked on an election campaign before, but after attending HSA’s campaign school, as soon as I walked into the campaign office, I felt like I knew what everyone’s role was and how I could contribute.”

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## HSA members hit the campaign trail

and powerless. It was reassuring to find that where I live, I'm surrounded by lots of good working folk willing to fight for a better life for everyone.

"Since the campaign, I've been elected as a member of my constituency association's executive, and am already looking for ways to be involved in the upcoming federal election."

**Eileen Carolan**, a Dietitian and HSA Labour Council Delegate, worked on a campaign in Nanaimo-Parksville.



"Having a few days of union-paid leave to work on the campaign made a huge difference in the way I was able to participate in this campaign. Prior to this leave, I spent a couple of hours doing pamphlets

and a couple of hours doing fundraising, but it wasn't until I spent four days non-stop in the campaign office that, number one – they got to know me, and got to rely on me, and, number two – I had some concept of who was doing what, and how all the pieces were fitting together and to feel part of what was going on.

"For the people that I was working for, there was a period of time that was required for them to know what I was capable of.

"It's not surprising that they didn't just throw me into doing some jobs – they just didn't know what they could ask me to do and what I could rise to. That took a couple of days of them having me there eight hours a day before they thought – oh, you know what – she can do anything I ask her to do. Then they started asking me to do lots of things.

"I foot canvassed with our candidate, telephone canvassed, made fundraising calls, photocopied, col-

lated documents, addressed envelopes, delivered signs, answered phones, did computer data entry, delivered leaflets, attended rallies, acted as a runner, an inside and outside scrutineer, and cleaned the kitchen and bathroom! It was enlightening to see the process first hand. The work was often very repetitive but there was always a buzz in the office that kept it interesting.

"Prior to this election I believed that good candidates were elected by an informed interested electorate. What I learned was that having the best candidate is not enough to win an election.

"I learned that volunteers make the difference, that there is no place for ego, everyone has to have the same vision.

"Everyone has to work hard and then come back and do it again the next day. I worked hard, I had fun and I learned a great deal. Unfortunately, my candidate did not win her riding. It is our loss locally and provincially.

"I intend to connect with our new MLA, and inform him of issues that concern me and that I expect him to represent me in Victoria.

"I'd like to thank HSA for giving me the opportunity to be more than a fringe player in this year's election campaign - it's an opportunity that I'm really grateful for."

**Hanne Gidora**, an HSA activist who works as a



Registered Psychiatric Nurse, used the full-time leave provided by HSA to coordinate the provincial campaign for one of BC's smaller political parties.

"I pretty much worked six to seven days a week – it was more than full time work. The first

**“The first thing I needed to do was to set up a campaign school for candidates and campaign workers. I had to come up with a curriculum and get speakers, all in a few days. The experience from the HSA campaign school was most valuable for this.”**

thing I needed to do was to set up a campaign school for candidates and campaign workers.

“I had to come up with a curriculum and get speakers, all in a few days. The experience from the HSA campaign school was most valuable for this.

“Next, the financial appeal and collecting signatures to get our candidates through the nomination process.

“After that, it was mainly a matter of coordinating volunteers to work with the candidates in leafleting and campaigning, as well as keeping track of all-candidates’ meetings, producing additional campaign material aimed at specific audiences and making sure we took advantage of all ‘free time’ media advertising.

“I also helped with some of the Financial Agent’s work, went over their speeches with the candidates, provided moral support and chauffeur services.”

“All in all it was a great experience. I am definitely going to work in future campaigns.

“I hope the union will continue to be supportive and make sure members know of the opportunities for financial support.

“Through union activities more members are getting interested, but to engage yourself fully in a campaign like this is definitely not everybody’s cup of tea. However there are many members who might like to get involved in a smaller way, and HSA has done a lot to spark those people’s interest and should continue to do so.”

**Marg Beddis**, a Dietitian and Region 7 Member at



Large worked on a campaign in Surrey-Tynehead.

“Until the writ was dropped I probably spent at least four hours a week from the end of January, working on the campaign. After the writ was dropped I probably spent about 10 to 15

hours per week until about the last 10 days before E-Day, and then I was at the office for at least four hours every night and all day on the weekend. My best estimate is about 100 hours of volunteer time plus the 7.2 hours of union-paid leave.”

“My family will say that is a low estimate. My children are now on a first-name basis with the campaign team, and my daughter was even seen helping the candidate rehearse his speech! My children now have new friends they met while spending time in the campaign office.”

“I was the E-Day organizer for the campaign, and it was a very challenging and rewarding experience. E-Day is a very exciting time, especially at the count of the vote. All the work up to that day culminates in the results at the end of the day. Although the candidate I was working for did not win, we managed to increase the percentage of the vote and

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## HSA members hit the campaign trail

build a strong election team for the next election call. We have already started planning for the future.”

“By receiving union-paid leave on E-Day I was able to dedicate the whole day (I really mean 16 hours of that day!) to working on the campaign. I think I got up at about 6:30 am and did not finish at the polling station until 10 pm, and then delivered the results of that polling station to the victory party by about 10:30.

“Team work is something that is learned by working on any campaign and the goal is to elect your candidate.

“It provides anyone working on a campaign with the opportunity to learn new skills and have some input into the direction of the campaign. Close contact with the candidate and being able to give important perspectives on issues that affect me and my family are some of the reasons I chose to participate in the campaign. I had several opportunities to give this input.”

**Debora Munoz** is a Diagnostic Neurophysiology



Technologist and she worked on a campaign that combined three Prince George constituencies.

“It took me about two weeks after the provincial election was over before I finally felt caught up on my sleep. I worked a total of 255 hours during the provincial election campaign.

Most days were 15-hour work days, some longer. It was 17 days of hard work and well worth it!

“I worked mainly as a communications officer. Some of my tasks were: writing candidates’ profiles for the media, candidates’ speeches for all candidates’ forums. I developed the candidates’ daily itineraries,

planning and media communications for media events, writing letters to the editor, persuasion messages for voter contact, and thank you letters. I also accompanied candidates at various events.

“When I had an hour or so away from communications I would take pictures of campaign volunteers at work, make signs, buttons, and clean up the campaign office.

“I developed a 350-picture, PowerPoint presentation of the entire campaign, which was shown on a big screen the evening of the election.

“Without the support of my union I would not have been able to achieve all that I did and learn all that I have in such a short period of time.

“I consider the knowledge that I have gained and the new relationships developed to be a great gift, and one which I will cherish for a life time.

“I experienced what it was like to be a member of a large campaign family and the positive spin-offs which follow effective team work.

“I recognized the value of having a positive relationship with the media. I met many new people,

**“I feel the experience and knowledge gained from working on the provincial campaign will be of tremendous benefit in helping me during the upcoming municipal election, where I am running as a candidate.”**

listened to people's stories, and shared common goals, concerns, and desires with and among people who aspire for a better, healthier and fairer society for all.

"Overall my work experience during the provincial election was an invaluable learning experience and one that afforded me an opportunity to put what I learned from HSA's Political Campaign School into actual practice.

"I feel the experience and knowledge gained from working on the provincial campaign will be of tremendous benefit in helping me during the upcoming municipal election, where I am running as a candidate.

I worked with individuals on the provincial campaign who want to help out during my municipal campaign and I feel very fortunate and grateful to have received these offers."

**Maureen Ashfield**, Region 3 Director, and a Long



Term Care Case Manager, helped elect a new MLA in Vancouver-Kingsway. HSA approved Ashfield for a union-paid leave to work full-time on the campaign.

She was unable to get the leave approved by her employer, so volunteered whenever she could. "The information I gained from HSA's campaign school was very useful. I really regretted that I was not able to get the leave from my employer, but the excitement of working on the campaign and of generally understanding what was going on was a great experience."

"I'm looking forward to being a Constituency Liaison in a constituency with a new MLA who is the Opposition Critic for Children and Family De-

velopment. It will certainly be a different experience this time around."

**Kelly Finlayson**, a Mammography Technologist



and Region 1 Director, worked on a campaign in the Comox Valley, primarily as a fundraiser. "I know lots of people hate asking for money, but I believe in financially supporting the things I believe in – including my political beliefs – and found lots

of other people feel the same way. Successful campaigns cost a lot of money, and since I worked for a party that relies primarily on donations from individuals, fundraising was a critical part of the campaign."

Finlayson has also served on HSA's Political Action Committee (PAC) for several years, and currently chairs the Committee. "The PAC's focus over the last few years has been on encouraging HSA members to get more involved in the political process. It's very gratifying to see the Committee's work is getting results. HSA members were more active in the provincial election than ever before, and it's clear to me from reading some of their stories that they really made a difference. The range of roles that our members played shows how much they have to offer in an election campaign. I hope we see as much enthusiasm and involvement in the upcoming municipal and federal elections, and that we'll also see more HSA members taking the next step of running for elected office." **R**

*For information about participating in HSA's upcoming campaign school this fall, contact Carol Rivière at the HSA office.*



## R U N F O R T H E C U R E 2 0 0 5

# Join us for the run!

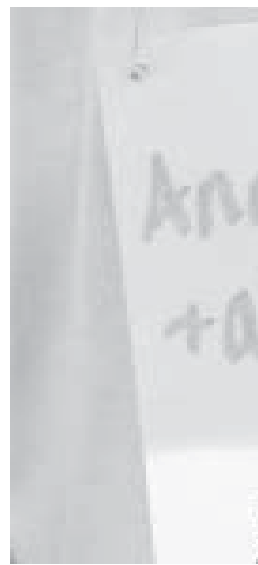
The 2005 CIBC Run for the Cure is just around the corner, and HSA members are encouraged to get involved in helping find a cure to end breast cancer by forming or joining an HSA team.

It's easy to get involved in any of the runs around the province. Simply log onto [www.cbcf.org](http://www.cbcf.org) and follow the links to register as an individual, join a team or form a team of your own.

Since 1997, the Health Sciences Association has supported the annual Run for the Cure, becoming a silver-level sponsor of the event in B.C. in 1998. HSA supports the run with an annual \$25,000 silver-level sponsorship, and works with HSA members to field teams and individuals and raise funds to support the most important fundraiser for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

In addition to the sponsorship donation, last year HSA members raised just over \$23,000 in donations for breast cancer research, awareness and education. **R**

*HSA offers prizes to members for participation in the run. For information on how to get involved in the CIBC Run for the Cure, as a participant or volunteer, please contact Miriam Sobrino at the HSA office or by e-mail: [miriam@hsabc.org](mailto:miriam@hsabc.org).*



**"As a union of health care professionals, HSA knows first-hand the devastating impact that breast cancer has on women and their families. Eighty-five per cent of our members are women, and thousands of HSA members play a role in the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of breast cancer patients."**

**— Cindy Stewart, HSA President**

## **Run locations on Sunday, October 2:**

### **Abbotsford-Fraser Valley**

10am  
Rotary Stadium  
Abbotsford

### **Castlegar**

9:30 am, CIBC  
1801 Columbia Avenue  
Castlegar

### **Golden**

10am  
1116-9 Street  
Golden

### **Kamloops**

10am  
Rotary Bandshell  
Riverside Park  
Kamloops

### **Kelowna**

10am  
Tugboat Bay at Waterfront Park  
1200 Water Street  
Kelowna

### **Nanaimo**

10am  
Caledonia Park  
Nanaimo

### **Port McNeil**

8:30am  
Ministry of Forests Parking Lot  
Mine Road  
Port McNeil

### **Prince George**

10am  
UNBC Agora  
Prince George

### **Prince Rupert**

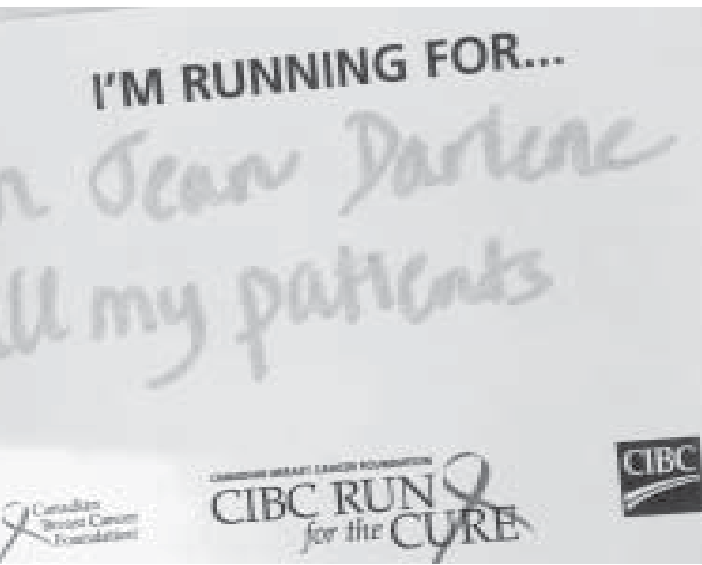
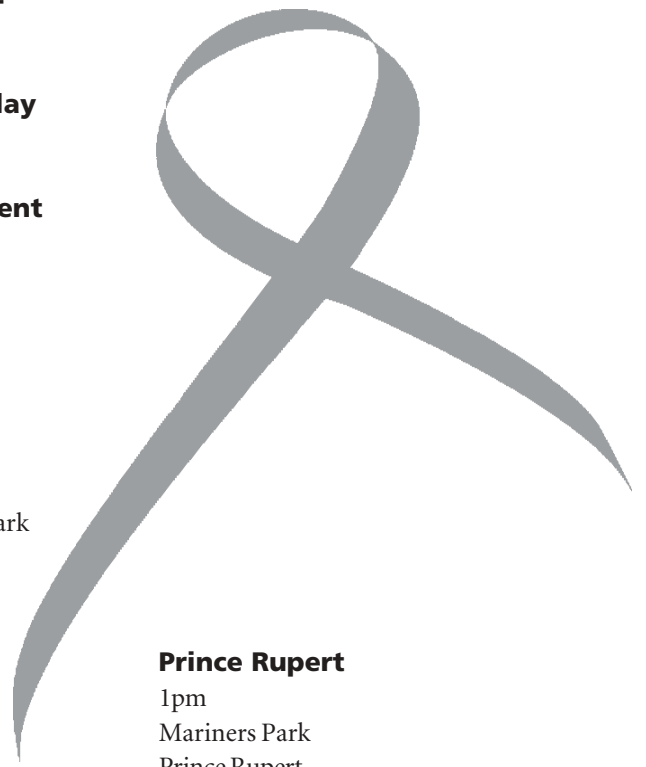
1pm  
Mariners Park  
Prince Rupert

### **Vancouver**

9am  
BC Place Stadium  
Vancouver

### **Victoria**

9am  
University of Victoria  
Parking Lot 4



# Committees

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

### HSA scholarship winners give back to their communities



HSA's Education Committee deliberates over scholarship applications and disburses awards. The members of the 2005/2006 Education Committee are:

- Jackie Spain (Chair)
- Audrey MacMillan
- Hilary MacInnis
- Bruce MacDonald
- Filippo Berna
- Leila Lolua (Staff)

For information on scholarships and bursaries available through HSA, contact your chief steward, or Leila Lolua at 604/439.0994 or 1.800/663.2017.

Every year, HSA's Education Committee selects more than two dozen scholarship and bursary recipients from among hundreds of applicants. These are the stories of three of this year's scholarship winners.

#### Juggling work and school – with the help of an HSA scholarship

Maintaining a full-time job while going to graduate school is a huge challenge at the best of times, and even more so when work and school are in different cities. HSA member Vanessa Charvin manages this difficult task with grace and enthusiasm – and a bit of help from her union, in the form of a \$750 HSA scholarship.

"I really want to say thank you to the union for supporting me. I feel very grateful to be part of this union and have this available to me," said Charvin. The money will help pay her tuition.

A Supported Child Development Consultant at The Queen Alexandra Centre in Victoria, Charvin travels every two weeks to Vancouver to spend an intensive 22 hour-weekend in a classroom. She is currently in her second year of a four-year program, working towards a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology.

"I leave Friday afternoon and get home Sunday evening, but it's worth it. Of course I get tired, but most of all I feel stimulated," said Charvin. "That, and my job, keeps me energized. Also, I like the fact that what I'm learning applies to the work I'm doing."

The Queen Alexandra Centre is an early intervention facility for children with developmen-

tal disabilities from birth to school age. Charvin works with three- to five-year-olds, helping clients access early childhood experiences and programs. As part of a multidisciplinary team she works with a variety of professionals – social workers, psychologists, and other care-givers – and also coordinates with the different agencies that play a role in the child's life. The job is varied, dynamic, and deeply rewarding, says Charvin.

"I totally want to keep working with families and children after I graduate," said Charvin. "That's my focus of interest. I just love it."

#### Training for a career of helping fellow Aboriginals

Like all HSA scholarship and bursary winners, Rhyannon Garant has a remarkable story.

Garant, one of this year's two HSA Aboriginal bursary recipients, is studying for a bachelor's of social work at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and Thompson Rivers University. She praised the union for supporting students who are training to become health science and community social service professionals.

"I think it is great that HSA supports Aboriginal students even though they are not part of the union yet – because it shows a dedication and commitment to help those who are in need," she said. "I think it is especially great that the HSA union has supported an Aboriginal social work student because given so many of the issues facing Canadian Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal social workers are sorely needed."

Garant put her scholarship money towards





**Rhyannon Garant won one of two available HSA Aboriginal Scholarships this year. She is training to become a social worker.**

purchasing textbooks for her course work. “The HSA scholarship has really allowed me to focus on my studies rather than worrying about financial burdens, such as daycare expenses, and textbooks,” she said. “My first semester at NVIT, I spent a lot of time in the library borrowing the required readings. The money I received allowed me to purchase my own required readings. Not only did the money provide valuable textbooks but it also allowed me to spend more time at home with my children.”

It’s clear from the way she describes her passion for her studies that she is already excelling in her field. Her words resonate with a familiar passion that many HSA members articulate about their various fields of discipline.

“I could write a whole thesis on why I wanted to study social work!” she said. “But simply put, I want to be a ‘helper’ to those in need. I especially want to work with Aboriginal women and children who have been victims of abuse.” Ultimately, Garant hopes to practice healing and counselling that utilizes “an Aboriginal approach and strengths perspective.”

This year, Garant was recognized with the Coldwater Indian Band Award, an award given to a

third- or fourth-year Aboriginal student who has achieved the highest GPA in the program.

“Having those textbooks at home really helped! I felt very proud that HSA would find my application compelling enough to support my education and career dreams,” she said. “I felt very thankful, fortunate, and honored that I received the award. A huge thank you to HSA for providing the support.”

### **Madden Memorial Scholarship winner reports**

*Anne Davis, Program Coordinator with the Comox Transition Society, was one of the HSA members awarded a Madden Memorial Scholarship. She reports back in her own words.*

**I**n June of this year, I was fortunate to be able to attend the Pacific Northwest Labour History Conference, held in Vancouver. This event brought together academics and activists for three days of interesting presentations and debates.

As this year is the centenary of the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World, also known as the Wobblies, much of the conference was devoted to a study of the history of that lively union and the lessons that can be learned today from their attempts to organize the unorganized workers of the early

*Continued page 19*

**“I felt very proud that HSA would find my application compelling enough to support my education and career dreams. A huge thank you to HSA for providing the support.”**

# Summary of scholarships and bursaries available through HSA

**HSA scholarships:** Ten HSA scholarships of \$750 are open to students who are continuing or proceeding to a full-time program of studies in any field leading to a recognized degree or diploma at any post-secondary educational institution. Applicants must be an HSA member in good standing at the time of application, or be the son or daughter of an HSA member. The scholarship is awarded on the basis of academic achievement.

**HSA bursaries:** HSA offers both full-time and part-time bursaries. Ten HSA bursaries of \$750 are available to students who are continuing or proceeding to a full-time program of studies in any field leading to a recognized degree or diploma at any post-secondary educational institution. An additional five bursaries of \$500 are available to HSA members. Applicants must be a member in good standing of HSA at the time of application or be the son or daughter of an HSA member. The bursary is based on financial need, in addition to academic merit.

**Aboriginal scholarships:** Two \$500 scholarships are open to Aboriginal students who are continuing or proceeding in any HSA field leading to a recognized certification, degree or diploma at any college, university or other post-secondary educational institution. Primary consideration will be given to residents of BC attending a Canadian post-secondary educational institution. The scholarship is based on a combination of scholastic merit, financial need and commitment to pursuing education in an HSA-related field.

Compared to the number of applications received each year for other HSA scholarships, we receive very few applications for the Aboriginal scholarship. HSA's Education Committee asks HSA members to encourage eligible students in their communities to apply for this scholarship.

**Madden Memorial Education Fund:** The Madden Fund was established in 1984 following the death of Joe Madden, who was HSA's Assistant Executive Director from 1974 to 1984. Through the Madden Memorial Education Fund, HSA provides financial assistance to members attending external labour education programs.

**HSA's Education Committee** oversees various programs, and one of their happiest duties every year is selecting HSA's scholarship and bursary award winners. The committee also oversees subsequent disbursement.

The Education Committee receives hundreds of applications each year. Jackie Spain, this year's Education Committee chair, advises members and their children to submit their applications in plenty of time. "Make sure your application is complete," she said. "Your statement of interest is very important to the selection committee."

HSA's Education Committee is made up of Members at Large elected at HSA's annual convention, and chaired by a member of the Board of Directors, with staff support from HSA's Education Officer.

In addition to the above, HSA members and their children are eligible to apply to various scholarships from the National Union of Public and General Employees, as well as the Canadian Labour Congress, including:

- ≠ Terry Fox Memorial Scholarship
- ≠ Tommy Douglas Scholarship
- ≠ National Union Scholarship for Aboriginal Canadians
- ≠ National Union Scholarship for Visible Minorities

See HSA's website at [www.hsabc.org](http://www.hsabc.org) for details, as well as for application forms.



**Application forms for HSA scholarships and bursaries are available at [www.hsabc.org](http://www.hsabc.org)**

## HSA scholarships and bursaries

and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.


A week later, I attended the annual Miners' Memorial Day events in Cumberland and, on behalf of HSA, I laid a wreath on the grave of labour organizer Ginger Goodwin, who was shot in 1918 by a gunman hired by the Provincial Police. His death sparked BC's first province-wide general strike. It was moving to hear the speakers, to join in the singing, and to represent one of many unions, some from as far away as Australia, that contribute wreaths to this event every year.

So, what does all of this have to do with us, as HSA members in today's workplaces? The more we learn about the struggles of the past, the more we realize that today's issues aren't so new. Early union activists fought and sometimes died for working conditions that we cannot take for granted today, as we see governments tear up contracts and gut health and safety standards, while awarding union jobs to private corporations like Sodexo with reduced wages and benefits.

Many men and women have spent their lives struggling for the betterment of workers in BC. In many ways, those who went before us were heroic, but HSA Vice President Kelly Finlayson recently reminded me that, "Some of them were our relatives. We are all just ordinary people. History sets the table for where we are today and helps us to understand how we need to go forward." It's up to us to remember and honour those ordinary people and to ensure that our children understand the history of the labour movement.

As a footnote, I was grateful to be able to access HSA's Madden Memorial Fund to cover the costs of attending the conference. I would encourage other HSA members to apply for assistance through this fund to attend educational events. A strong union is made up of informed and involved members. **R**

*See previous page for a summary of scholarships and bursaries available through HSA.*

<b>MOVING ?</b>		<b>RETURN TO :</b>		<b>OR EMAIL :</b>	
Your employer does not send us address changes. We depend on you to let us know.		 Health Sciences Association of BC 300 - 5118 Joyce Street Vancouver, BC V5R 4H1		memberlist@hsabc.org	
Member # (at top left of mailing label)				<b>CHANGE OF ADDRESS</b>	
<b>Surname</b>					
<b>Given names</b>					
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Home tel. ( )			Work tel. & local ( )		
HSA is committed to using the personal information we collect in accordance with applicable privacy legislation. By completing this form you are consenting to have HSA use the submitted information for the purposes of conducting our representational duties as a union, and in providing services to our members.					
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# Every breath you take

by CAROLE PEARSON

**A**sk most people what the fastest growing disease in the world is, and you would get a variety of responses.

Douglas Wang knows the answer to that question, and he is working at Chilliwack General Hospital to help manage the disease that Health Canada says has a “great economic impact on the Canadian health care system” and account for health care expenditures of over \$12 billion per year.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) encompasses chronic lung disorders, such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Emphysema decreases the ability of the alveoli [air sacks] to exchange gases and chronic bronchitis impedes the flow of air in the lung passages. The majority of COPD patients get the disease as a result of smoking and COPD increases the occurrence of pneumonia as well as lung cancer and other respiratory issues.

Influenza almost always exacerbates the battle of sufferers with COPD.

What so many of us take for granted in our average 20,000 breaths a day is a Herculean struggle for an increasing number of people every day.

Wang is the educator/coordinator in the chronic respiratory rehabilitation program for asthma and COPD and he is working with sufferers to take steps to help them breathe easier. The goal of respiratory rehabilitation is to help patients better manage and take charge of their illness.

The rise in COPD didn't happen overnight. It has developed as a result of lifestyles and increasing environmental pollution combined with an aging population that is now suffering from the conditions that take many years to develop.

“COPD is a chronic disease that is years in development, the disease symptoms are slow to manifest themselves in the beginning. We're just seeing results of what people did a generation ago,” Wang explained.

“As the population gets older, we'll see more people with COPD. As the demographics change in our society, we will see the illness grow at a faster rate, especially in comparison to other leading diseases.”

Helping people breathe easier, literally, is something Wang clearly enjoys, even if he did find himself in the profession quite by chance. After completing his undergraduate studies at the University of Winnipeg, Wang was looking for a profession in health care that offered solid employment prospects and opportunities for growth. A family friend suggested respiratory therapy – as there were long-term shortages in the field.

When he interviewed for respiratory therapy training, he was offered a spot in the training program at the Health Sciences Centre, and rather than take a chance at not making it into physical or occupational therapy studies, he took it. And he hasn't looked back since.

After 11 years working in acute care at Surrey, Peace Arch and Langley Hospitals, Wang resurrected the respiratory rehab program and Chilliwack General Hospital, which had been closed for a year due to a shortage of staff.

He speaks with great enthusiasm about the program and the benefits it brings to patients who suffer from chronic lung disease. Instead of finding themselves in hospital emergency rooms fighting for air, Wang is giving patients an opportunity to make choices to better cope.

“When they go through our program, they learn how to manage the disease process. The objective is

**“We're talking a 50 to 80 per cent drop in usage of hospitals when patients apply what has been taught in our program.”**



**Douglas Wang is passionate about his work as a respiratory therapist.**

to improve their quality of life.”

Wang’s asthma and COPD respiratory rehab program consists of ten classes, two mornings a week. There are six to 10 patients per class and the program covers “everything from exercise to diet, medication, how to avoid catching colds and flu, and basic bronchial hygiene and mucus creation techniques. It is quite encompassing.”

The other face of chronic respiratory illness is asthma.

A 2001 publication by the Public Health Agency of Canada — *Respiratory Disease in Canada* — notes that “the data on activity restriction and emergency room visits and hospitalization suggest many individuals with asthma require help in keeping their disease under control.”

Wang works with the asthma patients through

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**Douglas Wang**  
Educator / Coordinator, chronic  
respiratory rehabilitation program  
Chilliwack General Hospital

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education, including the proper use of medication and identifying triggers to implement avoidance strategies.

Wang’s program is showing results. “We keep track of people who go through the program and their admission rates at hospitals, and emergency visits have dropped drastically. I mean, we’re talking a 50 to 80 percent drop in usage of hospitals when patients apply what has been taught in our program.”

Wang says when most people are diagnosed with COPD, they don’t receive information on ways to manage their disease. They often assume there is nothing that can be done. When these people do show up at the hospital, it’s during a health crisis. “We see them in Emergency and when they get to the end stages of COPD. That’s when they just can’t deal with their disease anymore and at that point, it’s pretty well too late.”

“There’s a huge need for respiratory rehab programs,” he said.

Wang explains that while the life management

*Continued next page*

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## Helping patients breathe easier

of cancer, strokes, high blood pressure, and cardiac disease is improving, COPD death rates are increasing. That's one reason Wang is convinced of the importance of programs like the one he offers. "I know for a fact it lengthens their lives because the less you get sick, the fewer COPD exacerbations you will have, and the longer you live. It's not rocket science."

The leading cause of COPD in Canada comes as no surprise. "The vast majority – eight out of ten cases – of COPD are from cigarette smoking," he said.

"That's in our culture. In other cultures, it could be related more to poverty, lack of information and occupational hazards. We do have some high-risk occupations here, like welders and coal miners, but most people in North America and Europe who have COPD are the result of self-inflicted smoking issues."

Although fewer people smoke nowadays, this won't be immediately reflected in the numbers of COPD patients.

**"I know for a fact it lengthens their lives because the less you get sick, the fewer COPD exacerbations you will have, and the longer you live. It's not rocket science."**

"There's going to be a lag space of 30 or 40 years before we see any decrease. We're going to see increases in COPD before any distant drop in cases because we're only just getting the results (of the previous generation). And, worldwide, smoking rates have actually gone up because of the increase in smoking in Third World countries where the population is booming."

Statistics show that 22 per cent of Canadians smoke, but in some parts of Asia, the rates are as high as 76 per cent.

In the two years that Wang has been running the program in Chilliwack, he has seen the difference it has made in the lives of his asthma and COPD patients.

"I worked in acute care for years in ICU and emergency settings...but there's no decent feedback. The patients are unconscious on medication or they may be ventilated on a respirator. When they get better, they're discharged and we never see them again.

"With this job, it's a different approach because we monitor our patients and receive constant feedback. We follow them through the months and see how they're doing.

"We can see improvements, see the results. It's a much more rewarding job for me." **R**

**"We monitor our patients and receive constant feedback. We follow them through the months and see how they're doing. We can see improvements, see the results. It's a very rewarding job."**

## CONTRACT INTERPRETATION

# It's your right: questions and answers about your collective agreement rights

### Privacy, medical records, and the WCB

by SARAH O'LEARY

**Q:** I have developed neck and shoulder pain that I feel sure is the result of the repetitive actions required by my work. I put in a claim to the WCB. I understand that they will be getting records from my doctor. Can they do that without my permission?

**A:** The short answer is “yes.” The WCB has extensive powers to obtain almost any information they want about your medical history once you have filed a claim.

Their authorization is contained in the small box you sign at the bottom of the application form, or “Form 6” as it is known. That declaration is, in part, as follows:

“I declare all the information I have given on this report is true and correct and I elect to claim compensation for the above mentioned injuries or disease.

“I authorize the Workers’ Compensation Board (the ‘Board’) and Review Board to obtain or view, from any source whatsoever, including records of physicians, qualified practitioners, medical insurers or hospitals, a copy of records pertaining to examination, treatment, history and employment of the undersigned.

“Further, I acknowledge that the Board may disclose information from my claim to my employer for purposes of appeal, or may disclose such information to others in accordance with the law, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.”

The first thing the Board will do when you make a claim is to get the treatment records from your family physician and/or the treating physician who first saw you – including doctors at the emergency department if you were seen there.

Typically the Board will ask for records going back approximately a year, but in some cases they may go back longer than that. If it becomes an issue, they may go back as far as they want.

For example, I once represented a worker (not an HSA member) who suffered a brain injury for which she was entitled to a pension.

The WCB felt that all the problems she was experiencing could not be attributed to the injury and wanted to know what her

“baseline” mental condition was. They asked for her medical records, as well as her school records going back to when she was in primary school.

In cases where there is any dispute about which, if any, of your health problems are due to your work, the Board will get more extensive records.

They will likely contact every doctor you have seen with respect to the condition about which you are making a claim and get their treatment records.

If you know the Board will be contacting your doctor *write your doctor a note to go on your file expressly reminding her that she is authorized **only** to give the Board records pertaining to your work-related injury.*

Many doctors will send their complete file on a patient without any deletions whatsoever. I have seen people mortified by the release of medical records pertaining to issues completely unrelated to their compensable injury, such as sexual problems, mental and emotional history, history of sexual or child abuse or other intensely personal information.

A good doctor will black out anything unrelated to the claim and thus avoid acute embarrassment and distress for their patient.

You should also be aware that if there is an appeal the *employer will get a copy of everything provided on the file to the Board.*

As the employer is an “interested party” to any appeal (the rate they pay the Board goes up with each accident or occupational disease caused at their workplace) they are entitled to all documents we get.

Other agencies the Board may contact include LTD or other insurance plans and any other therapists you may have received service from.

All in all, the WCB has extensive powers to collect medical information about you. Be aware of these sweeping powers and take steps when you file your claim to ensure that all they get is what is related to the issue before them. **R**

*Sarah O'Leary handles WCB appeals on behalf of HSA members.*



This column is designed to help members use their collective agreement to assert or defend their rights and working conditions. Please feel free to send your questions to the editor, by fax, mail, or email [yukie@hsabc.org](mailto:yukie@hsabc.org). Don't forget to include a telephone number where you can be reached during the day.

## ACTIVIST PROFILE

# Expert care with a big heart

by LAURA BUSHEIKIN

**G**rowing old, losing our health, needing care, and facing death – these end-of-life passages await us all. We all fear to be seen as a burden and hope to be treated with compassion and dignity. Luckily for many elders and their families, compassion and respect for dignity are abundant in Gwen DeRosa’s skilled care.

DeRosa is a psychiatric nurse at Kiro Manor, a long-term care facility for seniors in Trail. It is a privilege to get to know and care for the residents there, she says, and a pleasure to be part of a team of professionals who share her level of commitment.

“Every day I know we’ve worked really hard to make [the facility] as much of a home as possible. We make sure we give the residents the best care possible, and that they have the best life they can,

changes, charting and chart auditing, care conferences with residents and their families, liaising with doctors, pharmacists, other colleagues and the hospital, admissions, staff meetings and education, and a myriad of other duties.

One part of DeRosa’s work that she finds particularly rewarding is palliative care.

“If possible, we keep our people here rather than have them go to the hospital. So there’s a lot of supporting people and their families and helping them deal with grief,” DeRosa said.

When she first was called upon to do palliative care, she wondered how she could handle the emotions involved.

“But in the end it became an honour to be with someone when they are dying – to give them comfort and be there for them in such an important part of their life at the end. Of course, it is sad. We do cry. But everyone is there together and we support each other. And you know you’ve given to them,” she said.

DeRosa had no idea she’d love her work. When she applied at Kiro Manor, her motivation was simple: she needed a job. Her training as a psychiatric nurse at BCIT gave her experiences in providing acute care in hospital settings, and she had no par-

**“HSA is a great union with lots of opportunities for learning. I hope to continue being steward as long as people keep wanting me.”**

and when dying they have people who care about them,” DeRosa said.

Kiro Manor provides a home for as many as 85 residents.

“It’s for any senior who needs help. They may have Alzheimer’s, or because of physical inabilities can no longer look after themselves at home.”

A typical day for DeRosa includes administering medication, carrying out assessments of the residents’ mental and physical status, providing a wide range of physical care from dressings to catheter

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**Gwen DeRosa**  
Registered Psychiatric Nurse  
Chief Steward  
Kiro Manor

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**"It's an honour to be with someone when they are dying – to give them comfort and be there for them in such an important part of their life at the end. Of course, it is sad. We do cry. But everyone is there together."**

**Gwen DeRosa, Registered Psychiatric Nurse**

ticular interest in long-term care. But she needed more income to supplement her on-call position at the Kootenay Boundary Hospital psychiatric unit.

"It was a financial decision," explains DeRosa. "I didn't know if I would enjoy it or not. But I found that it kind of became part of me. I grew to love it and to care about the people – not just the ones I look after, but also those I work with."

It's been 14 years since that fortuitous choice, and DeRosa still loves her work.

"I work with a great group of people and have learned a lot from them. I'm always learning, which is a great thing about this job. I've grown a lot as a nurse and as a person. I've learned to be more empathetic. I feel good about my ability to look after people's physical and mental needs," DeRosa said.

Her developing passion for working with seniors spurred her to go back to school a few years ago. She completed an 18-month gerontology program through Selkirk College.

"That has been a really exciting and a wonderful opportunity," DeRosa said.

Another opportunity DeRosa took up with enthusiasm has been involvement in HSA. She has been Chief Steward for her site since the late 1990s.

"I really like being a steward. There have been some interesting grievances, and I've learned a lot," DeRosa said. She has seen first hand that the union can not only make a difference in the workplace, but can also have political influence.

"This year I've done work with the MLA liaison. We met with Colin Hansen – who was the health minister – to broach our union's concerns. I think he listened pretty well. Overall it did help make some changes; for instance, we got forgiveness of some student loans for some HSA professions.

"HSA is a great union with lots of opportunities for learning. I hope to continue being steward as long as people keep wanting me," she said.

The future will bring change for DeRosa because Kiro Manor will be closing. She is confident she has enough seniority to be assured of a job at a similar facility in the region, where, she hopes, she will work with some of her current colleagues.

She very emphatically wants to continue to do what she has been doing. DeRosa knows that as long as she's in a seniors' long-term care facility she's in the right place: loving her job, enjoying her peers, and bringing compassion and dignity to everyone in her care. **R**

# Canada's young workers paid 25 per cent less than 30 years ago

Canadian business, which has prospered as never before in recent years, is paying young people only 75 per cent to 80 per cent of what they were able to earn with less education 25 to 30 years ago.

Over the same period, the Dow Jones Industrial Average, global shorthand for the health of the business world, has risen from 616 on January 1, 1975, to 10,973 on January 1, 2005: an increase of 1,781 per cent.

This decline in youth wages is documented in a landmark Canadian Labour Congress study entitled *Better Educated, Badly Paid and Underemployed: A Statistical Picture of Young Workers in Canada*. The

from one in five to one in three persons aged 20 to 24 since the mid-1980s. This reflects both the difficulty of finding good jobs and the need for higher education to obtain good jobs."

"It's harder than it used to be for young Canadians to get started in life. We've seen the signs for years, and now we've got the numbers to prove it," says Barbara Byers, a CLC executive vice-president. "This study makes it urgent for everyone in a decision-making capacity, including those of us in the labour movement, to deal with the issues that stand in the way of rapid improvements in the standard of living of those who happen to

youth hourly wage (half earn more and half earn less) was \$9 per hour, and the average hourly wage of young workers was 57 per cent of the average hourly wage for all workers.

- Almost half (45 per cent) of all young workers who are not students and are working full-time are low paid. This means that they do not earn enough to meet the poverty line for a single person. Low wages contribute to a high risk of poverty for young workers who do not live at home, and young working families with children.

- Unionization of young workers has been increasing since 1997, from 12 per cent to 14 per cent of all youth employees. Unionized young workers earn \$2.78 per hour or 28 per cent more than non-union young workers, and the union advantage is even greater for young women.

- One in six young people are persons of colour, 41 per cent of whom were born and educated in Canada. Despite higher than average levels of education, this growing group experiences lower rates of employment (and higher rates of unemployment) than the non-visible minority youth.

- Aboriginal youth face much higher than average rates of unemployment.

## Unionized young workers earn \$2.78 per hour or 28 per cent more than non-union young workers, and the union advantage is even greater for young women.

study was prepared by CLC economist Andrew Jackson.

It documents the worsening fortunes of younger workers compared to older workers, especially over the 1990s, and charts trends in employment and unemployment rates of teens and young adults.

"Youth, as a whole, experience continuing high unemployment. Teens have fared somewhat worse than young adults aged 20 to 24. Young men, as a group, have fared somewhat worse than young women," the study says.

"A very major change in the way youth relate to the job market flows from dramatically higher rates of participation in post-secondary education. This has risen

be less than 25 years old today. Issues like job creation, minimum wage, student debt, child care, training, pay equity and an effective anti-racism strategy," she says.

### Other highlights

- The real wages of young workers have fallen to just 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the real wages earned by young workers a generation ago, even though today's young workers are much more highly educated. Jobs held by young workers are disproportionately part-time, insecure and low paid.

- In the period from 1997 to 2004, the gap between youth wages and adult wages continued to widen. In 2004, the median

"Governments and policy-makers tend to assume that most young workers are students in transition to better jobs," the study says.

"But, this is not true of most young adult workers, a sizeable proportion of whom will remain trapped in insecure and low paid jobs. Much more attention needs to be paid to the plight of younger workers, including more successful transitions from school to work." **R**

Source: *National Union of Public and General Employees*

## BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGISTS

# HSA secures enhanced classifications, fair wage grid

**W**ith the assistance of a mediator/arbitrator, HSA has settled a wage dispute on behalf of Biomedical Engineering Technologists.

In May, the Labour Relations Board determined that Biomedical Engineering Technologists properly belong in the Paramedical Professional Bargaining Association.

The LRB then changed union representation for BMETS, ruling that HSA is the appropriate bargaining agent. HSA holds paramedical certifications at all facilities where BMETS are employed in BC.

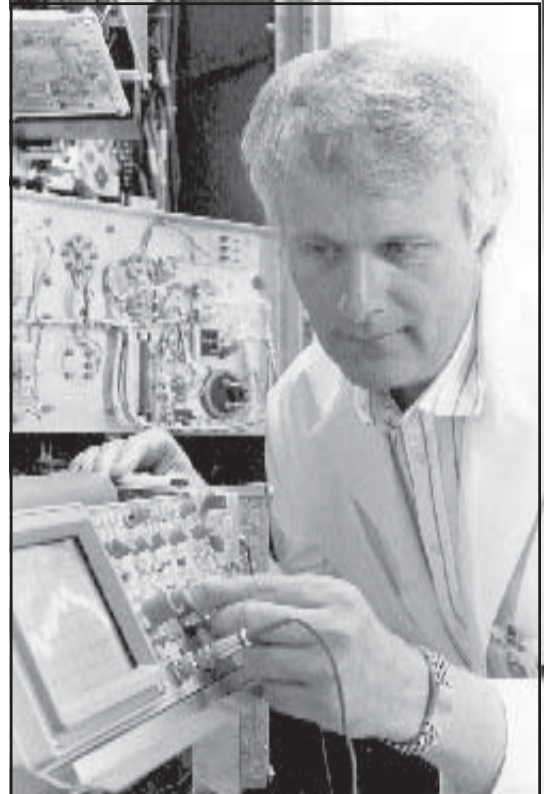
Before 1996, BMETs were represented by both HSA and the Hospital Employees' Union, but all BMETs were consolidated into the HEU bargaining unit as a result of Bills 28 and 48.

Early in August, HSA reached a settlement on the BMETs' behalf with the assistance of Mediator / Arbitrator Judi Korbin. The settlement, an attempt to resolve the union's dispute with the Health Employers' Association regarding appropriate wage rates and other classification issues, resulted in fair entry-level wage rates, favourable classification of supervisory positions, and recognition of work over and above the entry level.

HSA Executive Director of Labour Relations Ron Ohmart said that HSA – with valuable input from two BMETs, Ron Fyffe (Vancouver General Hospital) and John Brooks (Kelowna General Hospital) – mediated a wage settlement that reflects the reality of the valuable work BMETs perform every day. All BMETs were mailed a copy of the settlement in early August.

"We are confident that BMETs will find this a fair agreement that recognizes the complexities of their daily work," Ohmart said.

"HSA is pleased with the settlement, as it addresses issues that many BMETs had expressed con-



**Biomedical Engineering Technologists: Highly trained and essential to the health care team**

cerns about, particularly the lack of recognition for clinical and technical expertise beyond entry level."

"HSA would like to see a quick resolution to the other issues raised as a result of the BMETs' recent entry into the Paramedical Professional Bargaining Association collective agreement and HSA," Ohmart said.

An appeal on the issue of union representation is still before the Labour Relations Board – with the LRB granting HEU leave to appeal the board's decision to allow Biomedical Engineering Technologists to be represented by HSA. Submissions for this hearing have been made, and the unions await dates for the hearing to be determined by the LRB. **R**

## FOCUS ON PENSIONS

# Online Pension Estimator gives you a peek into the future

**Q:** I hope to retire in 10 years, but I'd like to get a sense of how much my pension would be. Is there an easy way to figure this out?

**A:** The Municipal Pension Plan has an online pension estimator at [pensionsbc.ca](http://pensionsbc.ca) that can be useful in helping you make decisions about your pension.

The online Personalized Pension Estimator allows plan members to log on and call up their particular pension information, and then estimate a pension using different scenarios.

Even if you are only in your 20s or 30s, the pension estimator can give you an idea of how much income you can expect from your Municipal pension when you retire.

The instructions for the estimator are simple: Log on to [pensionsbc.ca](http://pensionsbc.ca) and click Municipal Pension Plan. Click on Personalized Pension Estimator in the "Tools" section.

You will be asked to enter your social insurance number and the date you began contributing to your

pension (from your latest Member's Benefit Statement). Click "go" and confirm, and your pension information will be displayed. The pension estimator is encrypted, so your information is secure.

There are four sections that you can change:

- your retirement date,
- your termination date,
- additional service that you may be able to purchase, and
- your highest monthly average salary.

Using these four fields, you can estimate your pension under several different scenarios. You can project how much your pension will be if you stay at the same job at the same salary. You can estimate your pension at any age between 55 and 65. You can determine approximately how much your pension would be if you stop being a plan member (ie terminate your membership). You can estimate by how much your pension will increase if you purchase service, and you can project your pension based on your earning a higher salary in the future.

Easy-to-follow instructions are available at [pensionsbc.ca](http://pensionsbc.ca). **R**



In this regular feature, the Municipal Pension Plan answers frequently-asked questions. See [pensionsbc.ca](http://pensionsbc.ca) for more information about the Municipal Pension Plan.

# Strategic communication helps members take action

by REBECCA MAURER

**H**igher public profile. More influence over government decision-making. More support for local stewards. These are common themes at every HSA convention.

HSA members are increasingly aware that the decisions made by government and senior bureaucrats influence the environment in which members work. Members recognize that to be effective at the bargaining table, HSA must exert strategic pressure on employers through the public, government and the media.

Members also understand that a strong and united membership is key to achieving labour relations results. This requires a solid steward network that shares the work and is well supported by the union.

That is why in 2003, HSA consolidated various departments within the union, to create a new

## **Members also understand that a strong and united membership is key to achieving labour relations results.**

department called “Strategic Communications and Member Development.”

Our department supports HSA’s board of directors, labour relations staff, local stewards and members in advancing the interests of HSA members using a range of tools including communications, campaigns, education, policy analysis and political action.



**Rebecca Maurer, Director, Strategic Communications and Member Development**

We also work closely with stewards to mobilize members and increase participation in union events and activities.

Most recently, our department worked with the union’s Political Action Committee to increase HSA member participation in the provincial election. We held three non-partisan campaign schools that provided an overview of the election process, and gave participants concrete skills to work on campaigns.

At the request of the PAC, we developed newspaper ads encouraging voters to elect candidates who would support our public health care system and we developed a list of questions for members to use at all-candidates meetings.

During the election, a number of union activists contacted the department to find out how they could encourage their co-workers to get informed and participate in the election. Our department supplied leaflets and other information that specifically focused on HSA members’ areas of interest, including health care, social services and labour rights. In fact, the material we developed for the election was so popular, it was re-printed

*Continued page 31*

# Education helps members make a big difference

by AUDREY MacMILLAN

**O**ne of the ways that HSA supports our members and the work that we do on behalf of the union is through our union education program.

As a member of the union's education committee, I am working along with my fellow committee members to ensure that your interests are supported.

HSA has an extensive education program, and offers a range of workshops to members – from members who are interested in representing their colleagues on a joint occupational health and safety committee, to members interested in running for political office.

When an HSA member steps forward to represent their colleagues in labour relations matters, they are making an incredible commitment to their colleagues and to their workplace.

But the work of a steward can be complicated. And new stewards need to build a foundation of knowledge about the contracts outlining your rights as an employee. While the vast majority of HSA members are covered by the Paramedical Professional agreement, members also work under the Nurses, Community Social Services, and Community Health Services and Support contracts in the public sector, as well as under some individual contracts in the private sector. The union negotiates your terms and conditions of employment through those contracts, and stewards are the first line of defence in defending those conditions.

Because the core of the union's work – labour relations – is so important to members, all stewards are given repeated opportunities to develop and hone their labour relations skills through basic and advanced steward training workshops

offered each year.

There are many opportunities for HSA members to participate in education programs. Based on feedback and requests from members, the committee oversees timely and practical education programs for HSA members. The education committee, which is comprised of members from around the province, listens carefully to the needs and wishes of members who take advantage of education programs.

This year, after receiving feedback from members throughout the past year, a number of courses and workshops geared to meeting your needs and requests are being offered through the education committee.

Back to school starts in September with Basic Steward Training designed to give new stewards and returning stewards the basic skills they will need to advocate for members in their chapters. This is also a good refresher course for returning stewards.

By popular demand, in the fall we will be offering the Supervisors in the Union workshop. Supervisors have particular concerns and needs and sometimes feel "caught in the middle". One of the goals of this workshop is to resolve apparent conflicts and clear the lines of communication between supervisors and HSA in order to improve working relationships.

Specialized courses are also being developed in anticipation of the next round of bargaining for almost all HSA members – whose contracts are due to expire in March 2006. Workshops held in conjunc-



**Audrey MacMillan, Region 7 Director**

tion with the union's annual regional meetings will focus on preparing for bargaining – covering everything from writing bargaining proposals to media training.

For HSA members who are delegates to local labour councils, a workshop will be offered in October focusing on how to get HSA's message to other union members.

As well as regular training for Occupational Health and Safety Stewards offered throughout the year, Violence Prevention workshops will be held in November in different parts of the province.

In addition to HSA courses, the committee administers spending to allow members to participate in external education programs, including the Canadian Labour Congress winter school and the BC Federation of Labour Summer Institute for Union Women.

The power of knowledge is what gives HSA stewards the tools to successfully represent you in the workplace. HSA's education committee works through the delivery of courses and the administration of union education funding to ensure our stewards are best equipped to advocate for all members in the workplace and in the community. **R**

*Audrey MacMillan represents Region 7 on HSA's Board of Directors.*

# Are you retiring soon?

Are you about to retire? Do you know someone whose retirement is approaching?

HSA issues retirement certificates to recognize your many years of valuable service to BC's health and social services programs. Contact Pattie McCormack at the HSA office for more information: 604.439.0994 (lower mainland) or 1.800.663.2017 or email [pattie@hsabc.org](mailto:pattie@hsabc.org).

## Strategic Communications and Member Development

*Continued from page 29*

by the BC Federation of Labour to distribute to the rest of the labour movement.

With both a federal election and municipal elections on the horizon, our department will be working closely with the Political Action Committee to ensure that HSA members have a voice in these important elections as well.

Political action is just one of the activities that will keep us busy this fall. In preparation for bargaining, HSA is holding a series of regional workshops that will help members prepare bargaining proposals, organize essential services and increase HSA's profile locally. We will also be working closely with HSA members who take part in the annual CIBC Run for the Cure. Our relationship with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation has provided an excellent opportunity to educate the public about the services provided by HSA members, while supporting a very worthwhile cause.

HSA members play a key role in the success of these activities so you may be hearing from us soon. In the meantime, please contact anyone in our department if you require more information or if you are looking for ways to increase member participation in your chapter. We are here to help. **R**

## Strategic Communications and Member Development

### Who we are:

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**Carol Riviere**

Communications Officer (staff support, Political Action)

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Publications Officer

**Leila Lolua**

Education Officer

**Janice Davis / Pat Blomme**

Organizer/Member Mobilizing

**Han Brown**

Policy Analyst

**Marty Lovick**

Occupational Health and Safety Officer

HEALTH SCIENCES ASSOCIATION OF BC

## THE Report MAGAZINE

The Report is dedicated to giving information to HSA members, presenting their views and providing them a forum. The Report is published six times a year as the official publication of the Health Sciences Association, a union representing health and social service professionals in BC. Readers are encouraged to submit their views, opinions and ideas.

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors is elected by members to run HSA between Annual Conventions. Members should feel free to contact them with any concerns.

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RUN FOR THE CURE OCTOBER 2, 2005

# Who will you be running for?



**HSA is a proud sponsor** of the Breast Cancer Run for the Cure. Will you go the distance with us? For more information, or to register to participate, see page 14.



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