

# NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

To the Members of the National Council

For the period January to August 2009



Submitted: September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

## **Prelude**

Brothers and sisters:

I submit my National President's Report on behalf of and to the members of the National Health Union and the National Council.

The current Council and I have concluded our first year as executive heads of the National Health Union. While it has been a steep learning curve for the many new members of the Council it has nonetheless been a successful and encouraging beginning for the NHU.

One of the main challenges of any new organization is to reach an operational-ready status as quickly as possible. This we have accomplished together. Our National Council has exceeded our short term development goals.

Beyond this, many of our Local executives and representatives have undertaken union training and educational programs to better assist their members. Training and development will continue to be major priorities for us all. Knowledge of union processes, collective agreements, employee rights and other important facets of day-to-day workplace representation are the powerful tools our volunteer Local leadership require to carry out their important responsibilities.

Improving labour-management relations across the regions was yet another major hurdle to be faced. In reviewing the situation in various areas across the country, it became evident that, for far too long, regional Human Resources groups were failing to adhere to any of the standard norms of the labour-management process. Indeed, in some cases, management was controlling the process rather than being a party to it.

Let us be emphatically clear: the responsibility of HR in this process is to act only as management advisors. They should not, and will not, direct union representatives as to how they perform their duties and responsibilities.

Working with Human Resources at the national level, and through meetings with the responsible Assistant Deputy Ministers, we have now developed a clear understanding of how we would like to see the labour-management process function at Health Canada. It is the responsibility of the departmental to ensure that this information is disseminated throughout management ranks. In turn, it is our responsibility to inform our Local representatives across the country. We have agreed on a new approach and a new attitude. Now, we all must work to ensure its success.

## **Convention Wrap Up**

It has been a year since the inaugural Convention of the National Health Union. In this time, we have implemented or have initiated all actions as directed by delegates.

Given that this was the first Convention in many years to have dealt with all resolutions and other matters on the floor, the National Council was not required to address any uncompleted Convention business. I can also note that all claims, bills and outstanding debts have been reconciled. As mandated by the outgoing Executive, the NHU's next Triennial National Convention will be held in Ottawa in 2011.

## **Financial Status**

After consultation with our financial advisor, I can report that the NHU has weathered the global financial recession very successfully, and our union stands on very solid fiscal ground. At the request of our auditors, we implemented an investment policy over a year-and-a-half ago. Over this period, we have seen a steady improvement in our investment returns, despite the worldwide economic crisis.

As a result, we have ensured that the NHU has the funds necessary to accomplish our training and service goals for the membership throughout the coming years. The National Council will continue to review our fiscal policies over the next two years in order to ensure our continued financial security and to make further recommendations as to where we go as a union in the future.

## **Occupational Health Services**

Health Canada has decided to discontinue many of the Occupational Health Services it provides to other government departments, most specifically Ergonomic and Workplace Assessments. While this may have a far reaching effect on other departments, it will significantly affect our own members working in this area.

In initial meetings with the management group, we were informed that there would be no job losses and Workforce Adjustment would not be necessary. Although some may think that the numbers involved – approximately 72 members – the skills sets and type of work performed make placement in other areas of the organization a difficulty.

Given the number of specific, specialized individuals involved, we concluded at that time that the department's views of the impact on those members were overly optimistic at best. As it turns out, the NHU has recently been advised that Workforce Adjustment may well have to be used in some areas of the country. We have accordingly asked for the names and options available for these affected individuals and will be following up with management and our members on a continuous basis.

## **The Tripartite Plan**

While this issue has been raised as a concern in several regions, it is most pronounced in the British Columbia region. There have been mixed messages as to the implications of signed deals between governments and First Nations Peoples, and our members have legitimate concerns as to how they will be affected in the final outcome of these agreements. Statements to the effect that non-native employees would not be included in any program delivery operations moved out of Health Canada to new non-federal government agencies have been proven to be inaccurate.

The department maintains that all employees will have options as to what they choose to do, work force adjustment aside. The NHU has been informed that the details of these options have not been finalized and we are now waiting to view the final documents of any agreement regarding the transfer of programs and/or staff. This issue will also be on the agenda for clarification at the next National UMC chaired by the Deputy Minister. We have not seen a timetable as to other regions that may wish to create a similar variation of the BC model.

## **SDA Campaign**

We have now exhausted all internal attempts to reach a settlement for those SDA II's who were NHU members until 2007. The department (HRSDC) refuses to honour its obligations under their own grievance decision and provide these members with retroactivity for 11 years. The manner in which the department conducted itself throughout this entire affair was truly shameful. The process was wrought with misdirection, untruths and blatant lies, and they have as a consequence done a grave injustice to their employees

Our bargaining agent, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, has now launched a complaint with the Public Service Labour Relations Board and plans to pursue other legal options open to them. The NHU had vigorously and successfully pursued this matter for several years, rightfully seeing this as an obligation to our former members. While responsibility for this issue has now passed to the PSAC, we can only offer our sincere wishes for its successful conclusion and full restitution for all those concerned.

## **Local Structures**

Our Locals throughout each region are beginning to stabilize and most have fully functional executives. It has been an intensive journey of reorganizing structures and obtaining renewed commitments from members to take on active roles. That said, some rebuilding work remains to be done in certain areas of the country, as we have two

Locals where we need to get an executive formed and running successfully. It is evident that the need to have well-trained and active members in each Local is vital in maintaining relationships with management at all levels. We will continue to organize our Local representatives and commit to providing them with all the training and support they require.

## **Harassment**

Harassment of our members has become readily apparent in several regions of the country, most notably of late in Regina. It is scandalous that the department has been slow to respond to charges of harassment or bullying in the workplace.

The department has an existing harassment policy that should address the situation adequately. However, too often, the policy is not being implemented expediently. On several occasions, members have been left to their own devices – at the mercy of their tormenters while the department organizes to deal with the matter.

Harassment is an insidious offence against those who are powerless to defend against it and it manifests itself in many ways. Even those who are peripherally involved are affected if it is not dealt with effectively and immediately. Should you or a co-worker be the victim of such harassment, I urge you to contact your NHU representative for help and guidance.

For my part, I am reviewing the results of the Regina investigation very carefully. The process, results and the manner in which this situation is being handled will dictate our next course of action. This current process is shining a light on the validity of the department's policy, and we will respond and take action if so warranted.

## **National Office**

The National Office has been particularly busy over the past year. Obviously, with the election of so many new Local executives, the need for constant communication has increased. Our Service Officers, Céline Bourgon and Gilles Robinson, have accordingly been in constant contact with our Locals across the country. As well, my executive assistant, Gary Trivett, has also been actively communicating with members on an almost daily basis.

Celine and Gilles have also developed and have already delivered a Local Development Training Package in one of our regions. Their presentations will continue over the next year until every one of our Locals has received Phase 1 of our program. Those who have received the initial training have given us great reviews as to the content and the expertise of the individuals delivering it. This is just one more way we are able to bring the National Office closer to the grass-roots membership, thereby strengthening our union.

Administratively, the National Office has completed its year-end review. We have a newly-installed manual records system; as well, we are finalizing a review of some current electronic filing systems in order to improve the overall communication and delivery process between the National Office and our Locals.

The PSAC has contracted a Human Resources firm to globally review work processes and job description within its own offices. The NHU will also make use of their services to review our own staffs' job descriptions, work flows and operational processes. The results will provide me and the National Council with a guide as to how the National Office might be structured in the future, and perhaps how more effective it could be.

## **Monthly Activities**

### January

06	PHAC HR meeting Carling Rd
09	PHAC Meeting with Deputy's Office
13	DI Management Board
14 -15	Consultation meetings with HR
20	Local 70008
23	HRSDC SDA meeting
28	ADM HR - Planning for NUMCC

### February

3-6	National Board of Director
9-13	PSAC Convention Committees
16	NHU finance meeting
17-19	National Council meetings
23	Travel to Regina
23	Meeting with Regional Director
24-26	Meeting with Regina Staff

### March

04	Meeting with Director General - Sask
05	HRSDC
10	Meeting John Gordon
12	PHAC OHS Policy Committee
13	PHAC HR-Jocelyn McDonald
19	Meeting with Health HR
27	Meeting with ADM Programs-Giliberti

## April

01 Occupational Health  
03 Meeting Deputy Ministers Office  
09 DI Management Board  
16 Liz Ostiguy - Occupational Health  
20 HRSDC  
21 ADM HR – Agenda for NUMCC  
23 Local President Conference call  
26-30 PSAC Convention

## May

1-2 PSAC Convention  
06 PHAC NUMCC  
08 National Bank Investment policy  
12 SDA Final Arguments HRSDC  
19 Guelph AGM  
22 DI Management Board  
26 HR Gerard Etienne – RVP leave Requests  
28 NUMCC

## June

2-5 National Board of Directors  
08 Travel to Montreal  
09 DI Management Board  
11 Demo Aboriginal Rights  
11 PHAC – Jocelyn McDonald  
12 Meeting – ADM –Gilberti  
16 Calgary AGM  
17 Meeting Calgary HR  
18 Meeting 70008 Shop Stewards

## July

09 DI Management Board  
13-15 PSLRB Hearings  
16 Rally for Ottawa Homeless Shelter  
17-20 Travel to Edmonton meeting with staff and management  
24 Meeting Lisa Addario

## August

04 HR Cathy Peters  
07 Conference call Edmonton

## Conclusion

I believe that the NHU has moved an impressive distance from the issues and problems of past years. We are moving forward on all fronts, renewing our membership and involving as many grass-roots members as possible in our decision-making processes. Our Web site has gotten rave reviews from the PSAC and other components, yet we still can improve on its content and its use as a communication tool.

While communication with senior management has improved greatly over the past two years, I find that the relationship between the NHU and HR personnel in certain regions still needs considerable attention. National HR management has worked together with our Union in a collaborative and constructive manner, and we have forged a good relationship based on mutual respect. However, in regions such as Alberta and the Atlantic, HR managers have a less conciliatory attitude toward the labour-management relationship, and insist on making all issues confrontational. We will nonetheless continue to work together to improve situations in these areas.

As always, I wish to thank the many volunteers who have stepped up to assume leadership roles in our Union. When I first talked about the need for a massive rebuilding and restructuring of the NHU, we knew it would only work if our people came forward. You did. And we have succeeded.

I wish also to thank the National Office staff for their efforts over the past year, as well as our Regional Vice Presidents who have worked so hard on our members' behalf. Last, but certainly of no lesser importance, my sincere appreciation to National Executive-Vice Pat Todd, whose support and advice over the last year has been of immeasurable value to me.

In solidarity,

Anthony Tilley  
National President  
National Health Union