

MD's bid to oust BC politician comes up short

When ophthalmologist John Bayne became upset over changes proposed for the Delta Hospital in Delta, BC, he didn't respond with a simple letter to his MLA. Instead, he tried to remove her from office.

If Bayne's campaign to oust Liberal MLA Valerie Roddick in a recall campaign had been successful, it would have marked the first time a Canadian politician was forced to give up office in this way. The campaign, which received lots of publicity but failed to gain sufficient voter support, was made possible by the province's recall legislation, which is unique in the Commonwealth.

Under legislation introduced in 1994, a recall campaign can begin 18 months

after a provincial election. Verified signatures from at least 40% of registered voters must be collected within 60 days — there are no other criteria. Bayne's recall petition stated: "Valerie Roddick has failed to represent her constituents and should be recalled."

Roddick blames fearmongering and misinformation for the campaign, which can be traced to a "Save Delta Hospital" movement launched in January 2002 in response to rumours of "enormous changes" at the hospital. Administrators had to provide cost savings in their hospitals, and the most contentious issue was a leaked proposal to close the Delta Hospital's emergency department at

night. A "revolving door" of CEOs and the imposition of a new health authority "added to the fear and the pressure," Roddick says.

In the end, the recall effort failed when many of the signatures collected by Bayne and his supporters proved impossible to confirm. In all, 3169 signatures were rejected, and the accepted total of 9999 voters fell well short of the 40% requirement. Roddick says recall organizers wanted the hospital "to stay exactly the same as it was. I've said all along that there isn't going to be one, single hospital in the whole province that will remain static." — *Heather Kent, Vancouver*

PULSE

Canadians' awareness of Alzheimer's disease lacking

Even though 26% of Canadians have a family member who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and 20% have a friend or acquaintance who has been diagnosed, a recent poll indicates that 3% of respondents had never heard of the illness and 1 in 10 knew nothing about it. Another 15%

said they knew a great deal.

When Ipsos-Reid asked Canadians to estimate the percentage of the population aged 65 or older that has been diagnosed with the disease, they pegged the proportion at 19%; the correct answer is about 8%. Respondents with a university degree were

more accurate in their prevalence estimate than those with only a high school education (12% v. 21%).

Most Canadians (88%) strongly agree or agree with the statement that, as the population ages, Alzheimer's disease will have a dramatic impact on health care costs. People in the 18-to-34 age group (85%) are slightly less likely than those in the 35-54 (92%) and 55+ (87%) age groups to think that the effect will be dramatic. To prepare for the future, the CMA's General Council recently urged Health Canada to develop a "National Dementia Strategy."

The majority of Canadians (76%) correctly think that the amount of money spent on Alzheimer's disease research in Canada is somewhat or much less than the amount spent on research involving cancer and heart disease. It is difficult to determine total research spending for different diseases, but a point of comparison is that the Alzheimer Society of Canada spent \$3.4 million on research in 2002, while the Canadian Cancer Society spent \$47.7 million. — *Shelley Martin, Senior Analyst, CMA Research, Policy and Planning Directorate*

