



# Convention NEWS

## Delegates roll up their sleeves to get down to union business on convention day two

Secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside opened her keynote address Tuesday morning with strong praise for HEU delegates. “Every gain we’ve made, every gain we will make, comes from the pressure and advocacy of our members.”

And she thanked activists for their strength and determination in fighting back against 16 years of privatization and an anti-worker Liberal government.

“For nearly 75 years, HEU members have been a force to be reckoned with,” she said, reminding delegates that the union has weathered many a storm over the decades and has emerged stronger because “we stand up for what we believe in, whatever the odds, and because we are willing to fight for our own rights and those of others.”

Finally, she said, with the NDP in power, HEU is dealing with a government that respects workers – that respects HEU members – and that most importantly, respects the work they do.

Whiteside also spoke about the devastating impact of anti-worker legislation that stripped health care workers of contracting-out protections and opened the door to privatization and union-busting.

“In just a few short years, nearly 10,000 HEU members were fired because of *Bill 29* – and its evil twin *Bill 94*, and many more were displaced. But in this round of FBA bargaining, we are working to shut that door, lock it, and throw away the key.

“Across the entire system, constant restructuring and reorganization has made health care delivery disjointed, dangerous and totally unaccountable. And for the province, as a whole, there are serious questions as to who actually owns our health care system. That is the legacy of *Bill 29* and *Bill 94*.”

Whiteside also took issue with the occupational health and safety crisis facing HEU members.

“The fact is our members in health and community social services work in some of B.C.’s most dangerous workplaces for on-the-job injuries, including those caused by violence... and that’s just not okay.”



Despite all these challenges, however, she told delegates, “We are driving our solutions home to employers and government at every opportunity.”

And when it comes to future changes in health care delivery, “we’re demanding a seat at the table to guide those changes.”

In closing, Whiteside stressed the importance of mentoring future activists and building a union where every member belongs and has the opportunity to participate and lead.

### President’s Message

In his remarks to convention, HEU president Victor Elkins focused on equity, inclusion and local building.

“While we are working to make our jobs safer and more secure, we have to keep our locals vital, effective and positive. In fact, our jobs won’t get better unless our union stays strong... But often,

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members don't go to meetings because they don't hear anything for them. They walk away feeling empty."

He noted the importance of members feeling there is a place for them in the union.

And he encouraged locals to reach out and meet members where they are at, to invite them to contribute in any way they feel comfortable, and to foster a feeling of welcoming and inclusion.

"Sometimes it is unconscious," said Elkins. "We don't know we feel excluded... We just believe, somewhere inside, that nobody would listen to us, that we don't know enough, we are too young, we are not the right person for the job."

"That's what we mean when we talk about things like equity, inclusion, and belonging. Because we know that every HEU member can learn to be an activist and a leader. We all have the power to stand up for our rights and the rights of others. We have the strength and ability to help shape our union now and in the future."

### **Regional Vice-Presidents Elected**

In addition to passing a number of resolutions and constitutional amendments, delegates also elected Provincial Executive regional vice-presidents.

They are: **Vancouver Coastal:** Ernie Tanguay, Louella Vincent and Karen McVeigh; **Fraser:** Joanne Walker, Karin Vik and Sara Mann; **Vancouver Island:** Catherine Black and Charlotte Millington; **Interior:** Rhonda Bruce, Shelley Bridge and Monica Thiessen; **North:** Lisa Crema and Mike Cartwright.

### **Proportional Representation**

With the province in the middle of a referendum on Proportional Representation (Pro Rep), convention keynote speaker Maria Dobrinskaya, from Vote PR BC, delivered a timely and informative address on the issue.

"We have the opportunity to choose a new way of voting that works for you, no matter where you live and no matter what your political views," says Dobrinskaya. "Under Pro Rep, every vote matters in every election."



Dobrinskaya says Pro Rep will bring fairness to B.C.'s electoral system, and she appealed to HEU delegates to make sure they mail in their ballots as soon as possible. "Pro Rep ensures that a party which gets 40 per cent of the vote gets 40 per cent of the seats in the legislature. Simple and fair."

Pro Rep would ensure parties have to work together on issues that matter to British Columbians, she says, and there will be safeguards in place to ensure fringe parties don't have undue influence.

### **Greetings from the Mayor**

It was only his second day on the job, but newly elected Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart gave his first official speech to HEU delegates. And he thanked HEU members for the dedication they bring to serving our communities.

"Strong public services are at the heart of our city, but they are only as good as the people delivering them," said Stewart.

He also spoke about affordable housing and civic engagement.

"Affordability is my top issue as Mayor," said Stewart. "The consequences of the housing crisis ripples out into every part of our civic fabric."

Stewart said it's imperative for Vancouverites to be able to afford to live in the city in which they work. He also encouraged people to attend their city council meetings to speak up about important issues, "so we can come together and truly build communities that work for everyone."

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