



Convention delegates adopt historic measures to support union's equity work

More than 530 HEU delegates gathered for the union's 32nd Biennial Convention from November 1-5, 2021 where they made significant changes to the union's constitution and by-laws that expand equity group representation on the union's Provincial Executive.

HEU president Barb Nederpel and financial secretary Betty Valenzuela were both re-elected to their positions by delegates.

The convention had been delayed by one year as a result of COVID-19 precautions and was held online for the first time in the union's history to ensure members' safety in the midst of a fourth wave of the pandemic.

Landmark constitutional change adopted

Among the constitutional amendments and resolutions adopted, delegates overwhelmingly supported the addition of five equity seats and one young workers' representative to the Provincial Executive. This historic move comes as the union celebrates the 25th anniversary of its Equity Standing Committees.

"Expanding our Provincial Executive to include equity voices puts HEU at the forefront in terms of building a more inclusive and equitable labour movement," says Nederpel. "I am really proud of our delegates and our work as a union to make this a reality."

The proposed change comes out of a three-year Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) project, mandated at the 2018 convention. A second phase of this work approved by delegates includes a review of HEU's Constitution and By-Laws through an equity lens.

Delegates adopted a number of constitutional changes and resolutions on everything from ending dues on overtime hours and increasing strike pay, to action on affordable housing, recommitting to our work on truth and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and reaffirming the union's decades' long program to establish a common collective agreement standard for all HEU members.

"Delegates came with progressive and principled proposals to advance our work in the workplace and in the community and to make our own union structures more effective and responsive," says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard.

New Provincial Executive elected

Delegates elected 22 members of the new Provincial Executive and ratified the appointment by the Provincial Executive of Brisard as required in the constitution.

"I am really honoured to be re-elected as financial secretary and be part of this new Provincial Executive," says Valenzuela. "I thank the delegates for their support and for all the excellent discussion and debate at our first virtual convention."

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Other members elected to HEU's Provincial Executive include:

- 1st Vice-president: Bill McMullan
- 2nd Vice-president: Charlotte Millington
- 3rd Vice-president: Erica Carr
- Senior trustee elect: Talitha Dekker
- Senior trustee: Ken Bennett
- Trustee: Catherine Black

Eight alternates were also elected: Lisa Kreut (VGH), Rhonda Bruce (South Okanagan), Chris Batting (Prince George), Stephen Ariss (Kelowna), Manoj Saxena (RJH), Angela Allen (Kelowna), Arniel Abella (Kelowna) and Terri-Lynne Huddleston (Prince Rupert).

Regional vice-presidents elected

Delegates also elected the following regional vice-presidents (and their alternates in brackets) in regional caucuses on the second day of convention:

Vancouver Coastal

- Louella Vincent (Christine Edgecombe, Cora Mojica)
- Karen McVeigh (Ruth Mangrubang, Edna Rivera)
- Ratna Tithh (Maria Lugs, Chena Binns)

Fraser

- Bonnie Hammermeister (Diane Tomei, Sandra DePaz)
- Mark Williams (Catherine Stephen, Barrie Watson)
- Scott McKay (David Johns, Tina Thiessen)

North

- Lisa Crema (Michelle Jolley, Tracey Beckley)
- Angela Sharf (Marie Bradley, Deidre Downey)

Vancouver Island

- Phil Henderson (Adri Kroll, Lorna Kok)
- Ian Smith (Teresa McCoy, Lucie Jackson)

Interior

- Monica Thiessen (Michelle Nelson, Hayley Stefanek)
- Barb Shukin (Donna Thibeault, Val Sailer)
- Heidi Collins (Lynn Serhan, Nikki Bone)

Watch for more details about the convention in the next Guardian.

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