



November 4, 2016

Friday's keynote message: "It's about empowerment. It's never about power."

We can't sit back and allow another Liberal government to be elected in B.C. That was the message from Friday morning's keynote speakers – Joan Phillip and Grand Chief Stewart Phillip – who urged HEU members to come together in a movement to bring a change of government to the province.



"This government has been at war with children, with seniors, with unions," Joan Phillip told delegates, "and I can tell you, we've had enough. I don't think we could survive another round with them."

And she commended HEU for its activism saying, "I am amazed that you've taken such a progressive stance on just about every issue."

Grand Chief Phillip told delegates, "I absolutely feel at home in this room. I know in my heart you are our dear friends and neighbours, and you are the people who make this province work in spite of the incredibly stupid policies of the B.C. Liberal government."

He blasted government for its arrogant refusal to recognize the destructive impact of heavy oil pipelines on the environment. "And they

continue to pursue this LNG pipe dream at the cost of social programs and services," he said.

The Grand Chief encouraged HEU's first-time convention delegates and first-time speakers to find their voices and sense of purpose.

In closing, he described his views on activism. "It's about empowerment, it's never about power. It's about our ability to hold each other up in this fight to protect our interests."

Awards honour activists

In keeping with tradition, the final day of convention was highlighted by special awards presented to HEU locals and activists for their contributions to their locals, the labour movement and their communities.

Recipients included: Joanne Foote (HEU Social Justice Award), Lynne Taylor (HEU Disability Rights Award) and retired HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson (Mary LaPlante Sisterhood Award).



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The 2016 convention gavel was presented to Nanaimo's Wexford Creek local for their tenacious fightback

campaign after being laid off twice in two years, when their employer Good Samaritan Society decided to sell their facility and fire workers.

As part of their campaign against contracting out, members spoke to the media, collected 2,400 petition signatures, organized a letter-writing campaign, and even wore pink slips to a bargaining session.

Wexford Creek activists Samantha Lindsay and Wendy Chadwick, who helped lead the campaign, accepted the gavel on behalf of the 140 members who lost their jobs. And they thanked the union for all its support.

The HEU local plaque was presented posthumously to Sister Shirley Paul from the Waverly of Chilliwack local. Shirley lost her cancer battle on January 25 at the age of 62. A long-time care aide, Shirley was active with HEU since 1998, when she helped bring the union to her workplace.

As a dedicated activist, Shirley wore many hats as a chief shop steward, OH&S steward, local chair, and bargaining committee member. Even while fighting cancer, Shirley continued to be an activist.

IHA laundry locals recognized

HEU financial secretary Donisa Bernardo presented Certificate of Appreciation plaques to the Kelowna, Kamloops, Vernon, Penticton and

Nelson locals for their hard-fought campaign against privatizing hospital laundry services in the Interior. She also acknowledged the Cranbrook and Trail locals who will lose laundry transportation members.

During the 14-month campaign, workers and allies collected more than 13,000 petition signatures which were presented at the B.C. Legislature in Victoria. They also lobbied city and town councils to pass motions against the privatization scheme, launched radio ads, and generated a tremendous amount of media and public support at rallies and roadside demonstrations.

But the Interior Health Authority signed a 20-year contract worth about \$266 million with a private company, which will result in 175 HEU

laundry workers losing their family-supporting jobs.

“The union would like to recognize five of the locals for their tireless efforts in our fightback campaign,” said Bernardo. “Each and every one of

you is valued by your union. And we thank you for your significant service and contribution to the health care team.”

Staff union stands with HEU members

Janine Brooker, president of Unifor 468-W, brought solidarity greetings from the union representing HEU staff. She recognized the challenges local executives face policing collective agreements “when employers are politically supported to strip care from patients and rights from workers.”

HEU staff, she said, “are honoured to work side-by-side with you... and we thank you for the moral and ethical fibre that makes HEU so great.”

