



November 2, 2016

Delegates elect new Provincial Executive; re-elect Elkins and Bernardo

At the union's last convention, delegates passed a resolution to change the order in which the Provincial Executive (P.E.) elections take place. Yesterday afternoon, HEU delegates gathered into regional caucuses to elect their vice-presidents.

They are: Louella Vincent, Ernie Tanguay and John Fraser, (Vancouver Coastal), Tracy Struck, Joanne Walker and Maria Rodriguez (Fraser), Mike Cartwright and Lisa Crema (North), Barb Biley and Bill McMullan (Vancouver Island), Rhonda Bruce, Shelley Bridge and Jody Berg (Interior).

Today, B.C. Federation of Labour president Irene Lanzinger chaired the election proceedings for the remaining P.E. positions.

Victor Elkins was re-elected president while Donisa Bernardo was acclaimed as the union's financial secretary. It will be Elkins' third term, and Bernardo's sixth term.

Delegates also ratified the P.E.'s appointment of Jennifer Whiteside as HEU secretary-business manager.

The HEU 2016-2018 Provincial Executive also includes: 1st vice-president Barbara Nederpel, 2nd vice-president Ken Robinson, 3rd vice-president Jim Calvin, senior trustee elect Kelly

Knox, trustee Talitha Dekker. And delegates elected eight P.E. alternates. Betty Valenzuela continues as the senior trustee.

CUPE brings solidarity greetings

CUPE National secretary-treasurer Charles Fleury brought greetings on behalf of the national union's 639,000 members. He spoke about the importance of union solidarity and building union power through respect, open dialogue, and training effective stewards.

He applauded HEU's daily work on-the-ground fighting for the rights of members, while still organizing new members.

"HEU never gives up on members and members never give up on HEU," said Fleury.

"Alone, we can only do so much... When we work together and support each other, we have the people power and the resources to win."

Echoing Fleury's remarks, Paul Faoro, CUPE BC president, delivered a strong message about strength in numbers.

"One in forty British Columbians are CUPE members – there is real power in that," he said, urging delegates to use that power to organize in workplaces and communities to bring change to this province.

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He encouraged delegates to “step up and mobilize” to elect an NDP government in next spring’s provincial election.

“By doing this we can elect candidates who will fund public health care and will not continue to privatize our public services” said Faoro.

Women’s Gathering

Convention sisters were energized and inspired by a lively and moving program during the early morning Women’s Gathering, hosted by the HEU Women’s Standing Committee.

Attendees were entertained by four popular improv comics – Ellie Harvie, Christine Lippa, Sarah Dawn Pledge and Jamie Chrest – who all honed their skills at the prestigious Vancouver TheatreSports League.

And Indigenous spoken word, hip-hop artist JB – The First Lady (Jerilynn Webster) got the audience moving to her beat-box rhythms and motivational lyrics.

Keynote speaker NDP MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant Melanie Mark joined HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside for a riveting Q&A session.



Mark is the first First Nations woman to be elected to the B.C. legislature.

“We need to fight like people’s lives are depending on it,” she told the gathering, adding that “activism comes from fighting with faith and hope.”

She urged attendees to never give up, that people can turn their lives around.

And when asked how HEU could support the reconciliation process with First Nations, she encouraged people to bring understanding to the history and legacy of residential schools.

“Reconciliation is a journey of justice and healing,” said Mark. “And you are all invited along on this journey.”



Men’s Gathering

At the same time, more than 70 convention brothers learned about the challenges

and solutions around men’s mental health from University of British Columbia (UBC) professor Dr. John Ogrodniczuk, during the Men’s Gathering.

As Dr. Ogrodniczuk noted, the key to getting men to recognize they have mental health issues is by starting a conversation – one that addresses the specific challenges men face – particularly around recognizing problems, and reaching out for help.

“Through conversation, we give permission to ourselves and other men to talk about things that we may not have felt was possible or acceptable,” said Ogrodniczuk.

“I was touched by the reflections of one of today’s audience members, whose experiences as a young boy and later as a man resonated so strongly with the issues I was presenting on,” he added.

“It is this kind of sharing that creates a dialogue that will move us forward to take ownership of our health, advocate for our needs, and improve the lives of men in our families and communities.”

View his groundbreaking online depression resource for men at <HeadsUpGuys.org>. Based out of UBC, the site was founded by Ogrodniczuk and is a project of the Men’s Depression and Suicide Network.