



October 31, 2016

## Union's 2016 convention kicks off with energy, enthusiasm and solidarity

HEU's 30<sup>th</sup> biennial convention kicked off Monday morning at Vancouver's Hyatt Regency Hotel, as more than 600 delegates raised their voices in song – and joined in a rousing musical program, which featured HEU member Jesse Winfrey and entertainer Ndidi Cascade.

Squamish Nation representative Rebecca Duncan welcomed the gathering to the territory of the Coast Salish people and urged delegates to bring “a good heart” and “a strong mind” to the proceedings.

She performed the Musqueam Canoe Paddle Song, which Duncan says “started as a victory song after one of the major wars that the Musqueam people had, and on their way home, they sang this song and it turned into a journey song.”

Solidarity greetings from Joey Hartman, president of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, emphasized the importance of linking across the labour movement and the community to achieve common goals.

### **Bernardo reports on union's finances**

HEU financial secretary Donisa Bernardo got a rousing standing ovation after delivering her report on the economic health of the union, and the importance of being

politically engaged to elect a government more favourable to working people.



“We have a provincial Liberal government hell-bent on privatizing public services, downgrading jobs and slashing wages – promoting a system that keeps hard-working people straddling the poverty line,” said Bernardo. “It’s unacceptable in a province as wealthy as British Columbia.

“We have one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada. We have a housing affordability crisis. We lack affordable child care, and we still do not have a poverty reduction plan.

“That’s why we need to continue working with our labour allies to promote a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

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“That’s also why we need to continue investing resources in campaigns to fight back against privatization, fight back against a two-tier health care system that gives preferential treatment to those who can afford to pay for private services, and fight back against any legislation which erodes our rights as workers, as British Columbians and as Canadians.”

### **Solidarity greetings from the B.C. Fed**

Irene Lanzinger, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, brought solidarity greetings on behalf of the Federation’s 500,000 members.

During her keynote address, Lanzinger praised HEU for its leading advocacy role on key issues affecting workers, including equity, health and safety, wages and benefits.

“HEU has such a long and proud history of fighting for the rights of your members, of making contributions to the larger labour movement and being at the forefront of the bigger fight for social justice in this province,” said Lanzinger.

She also applauded the union’s *Care Can’t Wait* seniors’ campaign. “We live in a very wealthy province – but, in spite of that, our

government doesn’t fund care facilities to meet even the most basic staffing levels. That’s the central point that



you’re making very effectively in your campaign.”

Lanzinger further recognized HEU as being at the forefront of other critical labour issues – such as advocating for better working and caring conditions, and promoting diversity within the workplace.

“Unions are a poverty-reduction strategy,” says Lanzinger. “They narrow the inequality gap and raise the bar for everyone.”

Delegates also debated and voted on a number of constitutional amendments and resolutions, brought forward from their locals.

## **GET SOCIAL**

Members have several ways to stay connected with each other at convention.

For the first time, delegates can access a convention app on their smartphone, tablet or computer at [www.eventmobi.com/heu16](http://www.eventmobi.com/heu16). Receive regular alerts, check the agenda, take notes, and message other delegates through the app.

And don’t forget to play Social Media Bingo. Win prizes and score chocolate. Get your blank bingo card under Tab 12 of the binder.

HEU also has Facebook, Instagram and Twitter channels where members can view images, make comments and follow the convention as it unfolds.

And if you post something on your own social media site about convention, don’t forget to add the hashtag #HEU16.



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