



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## Future union leaders gather for HEU Young Workers' conference in Burnaby

About 30 HEU members have wrapped up the union's two-day Young Workers' Conference held at Metrotown's Holiday Express Inn on November 15 and 16.

They left feeling inspired, energized and empowered after an engaging discussion with North Vancouver-Lonsdale MLA Bowinn Ma, who shared her experiences and encouraged HEU young workers to get involved and make a difference at work and in their communities.

Ma spoke candidly about her meteoric rise in politics after actively campaigning against *Bill C-51*, a controversial anti-terrorism act initiated by Stephen Harper, which threatened the privacy, rights and freedoms of Canadians.

"I had gone from zero political acumen, zero dollars, zero volunteers, zero name recognition and no credibility in left-wing organizing to where I am today in under two-and-a-half years," said Ma, who's 32. "A lot of older organizers and activists often lament that young people aren't involved these days and that it's getting harder and harder to get young people engaged. They're probably right because there's a lot that's going on in today's world that actively keeps the public from getting engaged.

"But I often say, have patience with those people who disagree with you, and have patience with those people who don't understand social justice, income inequality and the value of unions because one day they might be ready to start learning. I am so fortunate to have had so many people who had the patience to walk me through all of it and help me understand. I'm eternally grateful to them."

During the conference, participants – including several attending their first union function – shared stories about their strengths as well as barriers to being more active in the union.

They took part in workshops, where they unpacked the tools for creating successful campaigns, including Care Can't Wait, Living Wage and Fight for \$15. And they learned some organizing strategies to take back to their work sites.

HEU's secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside, president Victor Elkins and financial secretary Donisa Bernardo all brought greetings, along with Indigenous leader Rebecca Duncan, and Vancouver-based performer K!mmortal.

Check out the next issue of the *Guardian* for more coverage and photos.

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