



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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Biennial equity conference: members chart a two-year course for HEU's five standing committees

Ethnic Diversity, First Nations, People with disAbilities, Pink Triangle and Women's committees plan to bring equality issues forward in the workplace and in the union

HEU recently held its biennial equity conference in Richmond, where more than 120 members and guests gathered to listen to speakers, exchange experiences, elect representatives to the union's five equity standing committees, work on bargaining proposals, and develop action plans to implement over the next two years.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy opened the conference by recognizing the ongoing work of the standing committees in bringing equality issues forward in their workplaces, in their communities and in the labour movement. And HEU president Ken Robinson welcomed members to the two-day conference, sharing his vision of an equitable society and applauding members for the individual and collective stands they take against discrimination, intimidation and harassment.

Guest speakers, all activists in their own right, included Aboriginal lawyer Sharon McIvor, live-in caregiver Jocelyn Vergabera, Romi Chand of PeerNetBC, and CUPE National equality staff person Harminder Magon. Each talked about her or his own experiences with discrimination, and some of their successful efforts to combat it.

Members then moved to education and action as they participated in a World Cafe to discuss discrimination in the workplace and who it affects.

The five standing committees – Ethnic Diversity, First Nations, People with disAbilities, Pink Triangle and Women's – broke into caucuses, elected their committee members, developed their action plans, and formulated wage policy proposals for 2010 bargaining.

The committees, each comprised of seven representatives, combined veteran activists and more recently engaged members. The action plans are focused on workplace and local initiatives, and the wage policy proposals cover a range of issues. The plans and proposals are designed to make the union stronger and more equitable for all members at work and in HEU.

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The union's financial secretary Donisa Bernardo wrapped up the conference by congratulating the committees for their ongoing contribution to the union, and thanking the members for their enthusiastic interest and participation in the committees.

HEU established four equity committees in 1994 to recognize the diversity of our membership and to help end discrimination based on race, gender, ethnic background, disability or sexual orientation.

In 2008, delegates to the union's biennial convention passed a resolution making the Women's Committee a standing committee as well.

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