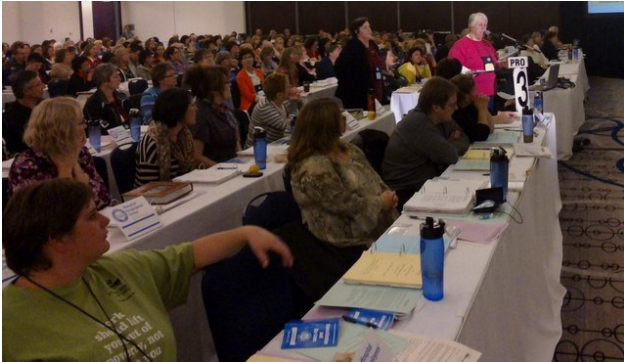


# CONVENTION NEWS

## Day Two: Delegates inspired to build their union and act for global justice



**November 7, 2012**

At the second day of HEU's convention, more than 640 delegates heard from their secretary-business manager and president on the state of the union, and delegates continued their discussion on building for the future with the introduction of the 2012-2014 strategic directions document.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson delivered a comprehensive report, addressing the status of bargaining, the struggles of independent contract workers especially in seniors' and the BCNU raid. And she spoke to the essential role of solidarity in fighting back the BC Liberals' draconian method of doing politics.

"This decade of disrespect must come to an end," said Pearson. "We have amazing power in our union at the grassroots. And our members are in a position to make a crucial difference in closely contested elections across B.C. come May."

Pearson spoke about the struggles the entire trade union movement has faced over the years,

particularly when labour-unfriendly governments are in power.

"You can't look back over the past 60 years without seeing that struggle is part of our history, and the history of all labour unions," she said.

In closing, Pearson said, "I want to say to all of you how proud and privileged I am to represent you and your interests... to government, to employers, to the rest of the trade union movement and to the public. You are, without a doubt, the heart of health care."

### **Robinson credits HEU members for role in delivering quality care**

HEU president Ken Robinson credited members for the direct contribution they make to their communities by performing their health care jobs.

"I want you to know that wherever you work in this province, whatever your particular occupation, the health care system cannot function without you," said Robinson. "Never forget that. Patients cannot go home again without your clear and consistent determination to ensure that their every need is met. Residents and clients rely on you so they remain healthy and safe."

Robinson added, "What I see here today is a strong delegation of solid leaders who believe in action. The list of our campaigns – your

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campaigns – is long and inspiring: bargaining, living wage, nursing team, equity, environment, minimum wage, Contract Action Teams, fighting privatization, fighting for child care. All of you are showing your commitment and that you care. All of us are making a difference.



“HEU is the union that stands up for its principles and values, fights for its members, and serves all of our patients, residents and clients with care,” he concluded. “We are strong and united.”

Delegates embraced an agenda for action on domestic and global issues: lobbying governments for safe drinking water for First Nations peoples living on-reserve, continue advocating for better seniors’ care, and working with labour allies to protect public services and oppose the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

And a motivating presentation by the union’s equity caucuses set the stage for Tuesday’s equity night social gathering.

### **Human rights, global justice underscore inspirational address from Lewis**

Former UN Secretary-General’s special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa Stephen Lewis brought tears of laughter, joy and sadness to delegates in the lead off to the afternoon session.

In his speech, he recognized the importance of the struggles embodied in the many resolutions before the delegates. From health care for refugee claimants to clean drinking water in

Aboriginal communities, from ending violence against women to the impact of corporate-backed international trade deals on drug costs, Lewis applauded HEU members for taking a

stand on these and many other issues that need a voice.

And his message about BCNU’s divisive raid was one that delegates and visitors to the convention won’t soon forget.

“When the rationale – the real rationale – for raiding is to argue that one group of health workers is more important, or more privileged, than the other members of the health care team, and therefore should be separate, that’s just disgusting,” said Lewis.

CUPE National president Paul Moist energized delegates with a passionate speech on trade union solidarity and the importance of exercising our democratic voices in the political process if we want to see policy changes.

“HEU remains a strong voice, the pre-eminent health care voice in British Columbia, and an important part of the CUPE family. We will continue to build a labour movement that opposes raiding. Our focus must be to organize the 70 per cent of Canadian workers who don’t yet have a union. We should be organizing the unorganized.”

Moist praised HEU for the union’s ongoing campaigns in defense of preserving public Medicare, exposing dirty and overcrowded hospitals, its advocacy on seniors’ care, and its grassroots Living Wage Campaign.

