

CONVENTION NEWS

Day Five: Sinclair salutes HEU's fight for public health care, Oceanside local recognized for fightback efforts

November 9, 2012

On the final day of HEU's 28th biennial convention at Vancouver's Hyatt Regency Hotel, delegates spent most of the plenary debating and voting on constitutional amendments and resolutions, and reviewing and adopting the union's 2012-2014 Strategic Directions document.

Delegates voted in favour of resolutions to lobby the federal government to reinstate the supplemental health care benefit coverage for refugee claimants; and to continue supporting lobby efforts by the Assembly of First Nations for a national inquiry into missing and slain Aboriginal women.

After lengthy debate, delegates defeated a constitutional amendment to change HEU's name to Healthcare Employees' Union.

Oceanside local honoured for defense of members and seniors

The 2012 HEU convention gavel went to the Oceanside Care Campus local from Stanford Place on Vancouver Island to acknowledge their outstanding work in fighting back contracting out and wage/benefit rollbacks.

They worked in coalition with community partners – including the BC Health Coalition



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and seniors' groups – to garner public support.

Tina Irvine and Jane Courtney accepted the gavel on behalf of their local.

“I’m absolutely speechless to be recognized this way,” said Courtney. “My faith in this union is so strong. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Added Irvine, “We fought hard in our local to get unionized because of the challenges we face. It took two years, but we’re here and we’re here to stay. We have challenges everyday like all of you, and our solidarity has decreased. We’re going to take this [gavel] back to our local and let everyone know that even though we’re a small local, we’re being heard. I’m grateful for this and we’ll continue the fight.”

B.C. Fed president salutes HEU team

In a passionate and rousing speech, B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair – representing more than 450,000 private and public sector workers in 54 unions across the province – called on HEU delegates to recognize that solidarity is the most precious commodity we have. He condemned BCNU’s raid on the union, saying, “this is not an HEU problem. This is all of our problem.

“We have to be united. We have to be strong. And we have to be on the offensive against them because they are the perpetrators of this problem, not us.”

And he reminded delegates that the labour movement is a movement of all working people, not only those who belong to a trade union. It also includes workers paid minimum wages, workers without proper health and safety protections, and temporary foreign workers who

are being brought into Canada as “indentured labour” with no rights.

“If we don’t take care of all those people too, then shame on us.”

Sinclair commended HEU members not only for the important work they do every day to deliver quality decent care, but also for the work HEU members do to defend public Medicare.

