



Wednesday, November 5

Longer contracts provide opportunity to strengthen union – Pearson

In her final convention address, outgoing HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson reflected on the union's proud history and challenged delegates to consider HEU's future.

From past delegates' support for a national public health care system – a decade before Canada created medicare – to our long-standing opposition to South Africa's apartheid regime, Pearson recognized that conventions matter.

"It's your parliament," said Pearson, "a workers' legislature where important decisions are made that will chart HEU's course for years to come."

She urged HEU members to seize the opportunity to focus on key priorities while contracts for the vast majority of members are settled for the next few years.

Strengthening unity across the private and public sector unions in B.C., stepping up engagement and mobilization of union members, putting into effect negotiated contract provisions and enforcing occupational health and safety regulations were four areas Pearson felt HEU could make a real difference.

But it was Pearson's advice on strengthening our democracy at every political level that drew the biggest response from delegates.

"We need to take back our country from the Harper Conservatives," said Pearson to the raucous applause of convention delegates.

"Come next year's federal election, we aim to unseat as many B.C. Tory MPs as possible and end Stephen Harper's reign."



HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson away from their families to be at convention to take part in decision-making that will build on the work of the generations of HEU members who came before them.

Pearson, who has announced that she will retire from HEU, was praised by a number of delegates following her speech for her leadership through some difficult times.

Elkins urges bridge-building inside and outside the union

HEU president Victor Elkins' report to convention focussed on the importance of strengthening locals, building labour and community coalitions, and pushing back against government attacks on public services.

"First and foremost, my job on the national and international platform is to protect HEU members' interests, defend public health care services, and fight back against privatization and contracting out," said Elkins.

(Continued page 2)



HEU president Victor Elkins addresses delegates

(Continued from page 1)

In recognizing HEU’s 70th anniversary, Elkins paid tribute to the pioneers who founded the union during challenging times, and noted that the same democratic principles on which HEU was established, still apply today.

“Seventy years ago, a group of brave activists took on the fight to have union representation at B.C. health care facilities,” says Elkins.

“They wanted a union to protect workers’ rights; to stand up against exploitation and abuse by employers; to advocate for fair wages and safer working conditions; to fight for justice, human rights and equity; a union to defend public health care services for everyone.

“That union is the Hospital Employees’ Union. And seven decades later, we still support those same fundamental principles on which those pioneers founded our union. And it is a legacy we need to pay forward to the next generation of HEU members.”

Responsive union project sets stage for future change

Two years ago, at HEU’s 2012 convention, delegates directed the Provincial Executive to identify changes in the makeup of the union’s membership and the barriers members face in the workplace and in the union.

That work was detailed in a substantial report to this year’s convention, which was presented to delegates by HEU’s secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson.

The report investigated how effective HEU has been in representing its diverse membership at every level of the union.

“More than 6,000 individual HEU members, leaders, activists and staff had direct input into the process,” she said.

Her report provided the background to Resolution 86, passed by delegates, which ensures the work to build and strengthen HEU will continue to go forward through a five-year strategic action plan.

Fleury says it’s time to “power up”

CUPE National secretary treasurer Charles Fleury congratulated HEU members in attendance for the work they do all year long and for the union’s many achievements over the decades.



“You knew early on that together you were strong,” he said. “Now it’s time to celebrate, reflect and power up.”

facebook®

Convention on Facebook

There are dozens of photos of convention speakers, activities – and delegates – on Facebook.

Help us out by tagging photos of yourself and others you know.

Search term: [hospitalemployeesunion](#)