



Thursday, November 6

Delegates elect Elkins, Bernardo as HEU's full-time officers

On day three of the union's 29th biennial convention, delegates re-elected Victor Elkins as HEU president and Donisa Bernardo as HEU financial secretary.

"I'm humbled," Elkins told delegates in his acceptance speech. And he pledged to take "the energy and enthusiasm you have shown here back out to the membership – not only in local meetings, but department to department."

In accepting her election to a fifth term as the union's financial secretary, Bernardo thanked delegates, her family and her local saying, "I am honoured for your faith in me."

Convention delegates also elected Carolyn Unsworth as first vice-president, Barb Nederpel as second vice-president, Ken Robinson as third vice-president, Betty Valenzuela as senior trustee-elect and Jim Calvin as trustee.

And Bonnie Pearson was ratified HEU secretary-business manager until her successor is selected and appointed to the Provincial Executive.

In other convention business, HEU delegates debated and adopted several constitutional



Elkins, Pearson and Bernardo

amendments, primarily addressing the union's procedures around bargaining and ratification of collective agreements.

Issues including the abuse of temporary foreign workers, Canada's refusal to recognize credentials of foreign workers, and the need for a national inquiry into the missing and murdered indigenous women, all ignited an outpouring of stories and a passionate call for justice.

Other resolutions adopted by delegates included a call for a national child care strategy, equitable insurance coverage for those living with HIV/AIDS, and support for LGBT seniors in residential care.

Working into the evening, delegates voiced support for raising awareness around the residential school legacy, expanded support for gender affirmation surgery, and increased funding to women's centres and legal aid.

Delegates also agreed that the union consider the participation of women and equity-seeking groups in campaigns and activities of the union.



Taiko drummers at packed Equity Night Tuesday

(Please turn over)

HEU celebrates legacy of strong women leaders at breakfast

Day Three of HEU's convention got underway with an exciting and energetic celebration during the **Women in Leadership** breakfast gathering, bringing together 400 union sisters and guests.

Local improv-comic actors Sarah Dawn Pledge, Jamie Chrest, Amy Wilding and Jennifer Perrin joined forces as The Lady Loves, kicking off the festivities with fun and frolic.

Making history as the first female comics to perform at an HEU function, the foursome entertained the crowd – not easy at 7:30 in the morning – and even lured some sisters onstage to participate in one of their improv games.

The audience then heard a lively and informative Women in Leadership panel, hosted by financial secretary Donisa Bernardo, with special guests Carmela Allevato and Mary LaPlante.

Allevato, the first woman appointed as HEU's secretary-business manager, and LaPlante, the union's long-time financial secretary, spoke about their challenges advancing into leadership jobs, the victories they celebrated at HEU, and shared their perspectives on women's roles in politics and the labour movement.

They talked about the gains women workers have made over the last few decades, including pay equity recognition and human rights protections.

Allevato said she's especially proud of HEU's groundbreaking work to secure medical benefits for common law spouses, including same-sex couples, back in the 1980s – long before that

critical human rights advocacy was taken on by other organizations.

LaPlante encouraged union sisters to be true to themselves, be confident, and continue to fight for women's and workers' rights. She recalled – with pride – being arrested in the Fraser Valley years ago when she protested over the threat of

hospital laundry services being shipped to Alberta. "It was the right thing to do," she said.

And Allevato told delegates to believe in their abilities to take on leadership roles and to mentor young women to carry the activist torch forward.

The gathering closed with an interactive and enthusiastic performance by spoken word

and hip hop artist Ndidi Cascade, who had the crowd on its feet, clapping, chanting and doing a conga line around the banquet hall.



LaPlante, Allevato share their perspectives during panel

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