



REPORT FROM CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION - NOVEMBER 2-6, 2015

CUPE National Convention was held November 1-6, 2015 in Vancouver, B.C. This convention is held every 2 years. Every CUPE local may send delegates, who are asked to debate and vote on resolutions and provide input as to the direction that the union should take in terms of political action, research, organizing and lobbying. The delegates also elect members to the National Executive Board, the highest decision makers at CUPE National. In addition, delegates can participate in lunch time and evening discussions, educational and social events. This year our Local 4092 sent 10 delegates, but no alternates. In total, there were over 2200 delegates on the convention floor, in addition to working committees, NEB members and staff. Convention opened this year with delegates paying tribute to retiring CUPE National President Paul Moist, recognizing his 40 years as a CUPE member, activist, staff member and leader.

National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury assured members our organization remains on solid financial footing despite the difficult current context. Although CUPE continues to grow, its revenue has been decreasing due to the trend among employers toward replacing retiring employees with part-time workers or outsourcing to the private sector entirely. "We need to fight this effort among employers to weaken us," said Fleury.

Delegates to the 2015 national convention elected Mark Hancock as their new National President, who thanked members for their support. "To all of our members in every sector, I am so honoured to have the opportunity to be your National President and to work with all of you." Hancock also saluted CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn for his candidacy and his ongoing leadership in CUPE.

Charles Fleury was re-elected by acclamation to a third term as National Secretary-Treasurer.

Over the course of the Convention, CUPE delegates heard many interesting and inspiring speakers.

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson spoke about the fight to



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maintain public services, saying "I don't believe in contracting out. I believe our workers provide excellent value."

The next four years present an opportunity to build the Canada we want, Canadian Labour Congress President Hassan Yussuff told delegates in his speech. <http://canadianlabour.ca>

AFCSME President Lee Saunders inspired delegates with a stirring speech about the labour movement's durability despite the ongoing and relentless attacks against us. "We are rising up together, for all the working families, for all the working women and men," said Saunders. "Together we will fight our battles. Together we will celebrate our victories!"

<http://www.afscme.org>

With union rights constantly under attack the time has come for a united global labour front to resist neoliberalism, said Rosa Pavanelli, general secretary of Public Services International (PSI).

Hundreds of CUPE members joined with community allies to rally in support of the Leap Manifesto, which calls on Canada to act decisively to transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a pollution-free economy. Keynote speakers Stephen Lewis and Naomi Klein sent a unified message that it is time for action on climate change. Klein underscored the urgency of taking a stand : "Now is not the time for small steps. Now is the time for boldness. Now is the time to Leap." <https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto>

Convention delegates gave former Al Jazeera Cairo bureau chief and award winning Canadian journalist Mohamed Fahmy a hero's welcome. Fahmy thanked CUPE delegates for their work to help him win his release when he was imprisoned on bogus charges in Egypt for more than 400 days.

Federal NDP leader Thomas Mulcair spoke of the irony of governments cutting funding to public services then criticizing and attacking the service given by public employees. He touched on the folly of the doctrine of austerity and the need for affordable child care, restoring the cuts to health care funding and raising the minimum wage. He left with a message of hope : "On continue!" (We continue!)" <http://www.ndp.ca/>

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission addressed delegates with a stirring account of the stories heard at the commission and played videos which brought tears to the eyes of many. He spoke of the need for self respect amongst Aboriginals and mutual respect with the rest of Canada, including new comers and future



generations. He underscored that the wounds from the residential schools system were deep and raw despite the passage of time, and that this damage was passed from generation to generation. He also spoke of his hope that the education of future generations of Aboriginals and Canadians would result in true reconciliation. <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>

Over 2200 delegates had their say as well, making it clear to the National Executive Board and committees that governments across Canada – municipal, provincial and federal – are dismantling social structures and public services which have been the source of many good jobs. One member sounded the alarm on the government decertifying certain Red Seal trades & apprenticeships, while others talked about the contracting out of hospital and patient care services, such as laundry and food preparation. Many delegates spoke of the struggle to balance workload when retiree jobs were replaced with precarious part time work. Young workers from the university sector spoke very passionately about the need for protection for part time workers. Delegates also discussed the need to organized the unorganized, especially in the private sector, as their low wages and non-existent benefits serve to bring down wages and benefits in the entire sector. Delegates made it clear that CUPE National should make fighting this downward pressure in the race to the bottom a priority.

The delegates also debated and provided input into the “Strategic Directions” document, which provides a roadmap for CUPE National to use over the next two years. It outlines the areas of research, lobbying, political action and union development CUPE will concentrate on. The final document is posted on CUPE National website http://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/cupe_strategic_directions_2015-2017_0.pdf

Delegate debated and voted on constitutional amendments and resolutions covering many diverse issues including the need to lobby the government for disability rights, protect and expand Medicare, create a Pharmacare program, among many others. Two very controversial resolutions were debated on the floor but failed with very close margins. The first involved removing the 10 day waiting period for strike pay. Young, part time and precarious workers were very passionate about needing strike pay from day one, while other delegates felt they did not have enough information about the funding formula or health of the strike fund to make an informed decision. The vote was extremely close and although this resolution put forward by CUPE Ontario was defeated, the issue will be studied by the National Executive Board and brought back to Convention in 2017 for delegates to debate again. The second controversial

resolution was to create 4 Diversity Vice President positions on the NEB, one for Women, LGBTII, Young Workers and Workers with Disabilities. While over half of the delegates voted in favour of this resolution, it died on the floor as it required an amendment to the Constitution, which requires 2/3 of the delegates to approve it.

Full information, including pictures, videos and copies of all the documents, including financials, can be found at <http://cupe.ca/cupe-national-convention-2015>. The next CUPE National Convention is will be held in the fall of 2017. Consider becoming a delegate or apply to be on one of the working committees at <http://cupe.ca/apply-sit-2016-2017-cupe-national-committees-and-working-groups>. Our own local Vice President Larry Roy was part of the Resolutions Committee this year and we look forward to seeing more members involved in the upcoming years

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