

UHEW - STSE

Inaugural Convention – Congrès Inaugural

Toronto ~ August 22-24 2017

Pierre Vallieres – Observer

I have had the privilege of being selected to assist at the Inaugural Convention of the Unification of both the Health and Environment Workers Unions. It was an eye-opening experience into the world of Union representation, Union Conventions, presentation of Resolutions and the voting for and against these Resolutions, and the debates around each one of these important documents.

As for me, I found the Convention to be short on time. The first day was way too long, with the introductions and the special opening ceremonies taking quite a bit of time. I had no issue with the First Nations opening the Convention, but it cut short on many of the Unions proceedings. In my opinion, the next Convention should be held over a five or even a six day period.

Though at times the atmosphere on certain Resolutions were hotly debated, in general they were discussed, in a calm and orderly fashion, and either passed or rejected. Due to the time constraint, many of the Resolutions were not discussed during the time period of the Convention and it was decided that some of the representatives from each region would stay behind to finish the agendas not touched. That is another, and I would say, the primary reason the Convention should be held over a longer period of time.

The Finance Committees went through there Resolutions quite expediently with only a few little snags as to wording, but quickly rectified and they passed on to the next agenda.

The By-Law Resolutions took a lot of time, especially in the debates that took place. We could see the difference in opinion as to whether a certain Resolution was brought forward by Environment or by the Health groups, being our first time debating issues together. Some of these Resolutions were hotly debated, with a few of the delegates getting hot under the collar. With the able handling, of the majority of the hot debates, by our President, Brother Todd Panas, things were brought under control and respect brought back on the floor. Some of the By-Laws took quite a bit of time to debate and on a few occasions were even brought back on the floor for further debates. This is the major reason more time should be allotted to the Convention, as 3 days to cover all is way too short.

The General Resolutions were the ones which had the least time spent on, as the Convention was approaching the end a few of them were kind of rushed through. None of the Bargaining issues were discussed as time had run out.

As the final hours were counted down, delegates were already leaving to catch trains, flights or private transport and this led to a bit of confusion and almost desperate means to finalize the Convention. Again, not enough time.

Most evenings were spent going around to see the different Representatives from all the Regions from around Canada, and this was a great experience to have the time to sit and talk with all these wonderful brothers and sisters and to share each other's concerns and suggestions. Once again, time was a critical factor, since many members never had the opportunity to visit all of the other regions Delegates Contact Rooms.

In general, I would say that this Convention was a real eye opener on the behind the scene workings of the Union. Much planning and trying to fit the maximum amount of legislation into such a short period of time. Also, the fact that we had elections for all the major positions to put forward, and the time period which was needed for all the potential candidates to give their introductions and then have the final vote, again took precious time from the Resolutions.

Now that the Convention is over and we have all had a chance to meet our new Brothers and Sisters from across Canada and from the two best Unions now figuring as one, we can now look ahead to better days, and better fights for our Rights and Freedoms, for all the working class.

My thanks to my Local President, Sister Rubin Kooner, for her patience and understanding and the leadership she has shown to me and many others. To my Local Vice President, Brother Mike Lister, for his friendship and his leadership in all things Union, a great man to have around. To my Treasurer, Brother Naveed Ahmad for bringing to light all the hard work which finances requires of a person. And I also would like to thank my Brothers in the Stewardship, Brothers Justin Cooke, and David Buote, for their support and explaining of the proceedings at the Convention.