

CUPE NATIONAL REPORT – VANCOUVER 2011

OCT. 30 – NOV.4 2011

CUPE 973 – Members and Executive

I would like to start off with a heartfelt thank you, for allowing me to go this year to our National Convention in Vancouver. This was a great way to bond with our fellow executive members and a surprising way to find out how the other unions work. At the start of the convention I felt as if I was there only to warm up a seat. I didn't have voting privileges, I was there as an alternate. But I soon found out the real meaning of why we attend National convention, not only was it to vote in, our National team but to learn how passionate our Union members are when it comes to FAIR play.

National Convention: I learned that the heart of convention actually lies with the 2,000 plus delegates that make up 'CUPE Parliament'.

These delegates are sent from all CUPE locals across Canada to speak on behalf of their members – done so by voting in favour of resolutions. Any local can submit resolutions to the national convention and these resolutions are used to give direction to the National Executive Board for the next 2 years. The National Executive Board is similar in structure to our local executive board whereas they make decisions and conduct the business of the union.

The overall feel of convention was that of disgust towards Harper's conservative Government. Many of the resolutions passed called on action to prevent and stop Harper's attack on public services and his outright attacks on worker's rights (specifically CUPW and Air Canada), and his disregard of the aboriginal people of this country. I was appalled to learn that more than 50% of reserves in Canada have un-safe drinking water and lack proper educational facilities.

Convention also featured a number of keynote speakers to help empower us as union activists and to feed our passion! It seems many union activists lose steam after some time, so going to Provincial and National Conventions help bring back the passion and strong commitment that we need to give our members. You get that you are part of a larger picture and are proud to represent your own local and CUPE as a whole.

Speakers such as NDP leader Nycole Turmel, Maude Barlow, and Stephen Lewis – all really moved me. Being quite new to the labour movement, I was unfamiliar with the work that these people have been doing to defend worker's rights. But now, after spending a week with fellow CUPE union members – and these gifted

and motivated speakers, I am much more knowledgeable of the labour movement and even better equipped to continue my involvement with our local's administration and struggles.

Some of examples of the resolutions passed at convention:

- Organize all academic and non-academic workers in Canada's post-secondary education sector
- Engage in an internal campaign to encourage CUPE locals and chartered organizations to contribute one dollar (\$1) per member per year to CUPE's Global Justice Fund
- Provide more support to the post-secondary sector through bi-annual sector Conferences/meetings and ongoing dedicated research and communications Support
- Call on the Canadian Labour Congress to unite the labour movement with visible actions to defend trade union rights, including free collective bargaining rights and the right to strike, and actions that connect to all Canadians in defence of their democratic rights
- Continue to participate in progressive pension reform on a provincial and federal basis to secure defined benefit pension plans for all workers
- Launch an education and action "Enough is Enough Campaign" to rectify the Aboriginal Nations' lack of access to clean, safe public water

Thank you once again for helping me understand why we truly go to these conventions and how we can make changes that will affect the city, not only locally but Nationally.

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Chief Steward 973