

## 2015 CUPE National Convention

Vancouver Convention Centre  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
November 2-6, 2015

I would like to thank Local 973 members for allowing me to attend the 2015 CUPE National Convention which was held in Vancouver, British Columbia. What an amazing experience.

With mostly rainy days being the norm, we were lucky enough to have a couple of days of dry weather to make the trek to the convention centre. Monday, members were introduced to a moving opening ceremony by one of the leaders of the Squamish Territory who led the group in a native sing-along. The B.C. Sector CUPE Leader, Mark Hancock who would ultimately be voted in as our new National President was also introduced as well as the Mayor of Vancouver who was incredibly labour-friendly. The Mayor commented to his commitment to a \$15 living wage, better child care and aid in homelessness which was quite prevalent in the City. Paul Moist presented the National Presidents Report followed in the afternoon with the National Secretary-Treasurer's Report and Trustee's Report.

As the week progressed, the members listened to speakers such as Rosa Pavanelli, the General Secretary for Public Services International; and Lee Saunders (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees – AFSCME). What an incredibly powerful, motivating speaker. Lee spoke to the labour movement's fight against relentless attacks against it. Lee did note a major decision is coming down shortly on whether the US Supreme Court decides whether a Union Local's members will HAVE to pay dues (making it a choice). Again, this could potentially destroy a local's coffers. My favourite quote from the week was from Paul Moist who said "it's not the debate; it's the silence". Another moving speaker was Chief Justice Sinclair who spoke about Aboriginal issues (ie: young children earlier in the Century being forcibly taken from their families never to be seen by them again and had the "savage" removed from the child and educated them but were still not accepted in society).

Currently, our strike fund is quite healthy sitting at \$80 million. It is believed within the next year or so, it will achieve the \$100 million mark.

I found it quite unusual some of the problems CUPE Locals were experiencing such as one local who had 6,000 members of which 6 cases resulted in allegations cost the local over \$100,000 in legal costs. In most of this local's cases, the accuser was the same person. It was noted that in a smaller local, this could potentially bankrupt the Local and what were some solutions to combat this? Nothing was resolved as this was not the platform for this type of resolution.

The National Election took place with 2,208 voting delegates attending. 2,147 cast ballots with 29 spoiled ballots. The end result was Fred Hahn receiving 908 votes and Mark Hancock receiving 1,210 votes (a difference of 302 votes).

It was a decidedly conflicted, divided conference this year as there were many heated debates and discussions. One such debate was a resolution for members to receive immediate strike pay. There were 18 speakers allowed to comment at the microphones and then debate ceased to vote. A show of voting cards was taken which resulted in an extremely close vote; a standing vote then took place and many members felt this should have been a ballot vote. MANY heated comments were made and at points, the convention was quite unruly. Another such conflicted vote was to do with adding 4 additional votes

to the Diversity group sitting on the National Executive Board. Again, a show of ballots took place which was too close to call so a standing vote was held and again disputed. Ultimately the total votes were 1,344 cast ballots with 674 "for" and 670 "against"... it just doesn't get any closer than that!

The National Executive touched on the "LEAP" Manifesto repeatedly throughout the week and I believe this will be something that will become more widespread with information to members. LEAP is a vision which calls on Canada to act decisively to transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a pollution-free economy. The B.C. Mayor and Council are already on board with this decision doing their best to keep participation and momentum up for the coming November 29 Global Climate March.

Friday, we lost quorum around 12:30pm just as we were going to break for lunch. It was determined the Conference was closed and everyone was dismissed.

Again, thank you so much for allowing me to attend. Although it was a long week, it certainly was loaded with information, new contacts and a desire to visit the City again in the future.

Marg Lemoine  
*Treasurer, CUPE Local 973*