

**EXECUTIVE REPORT – CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION 2019**

Oct 2019

CUPE National Convention 2019 Report

CUPE 2081 members in attendance: Erynne Grant, Keith Todd, Petty Wong, Shane Johnson  
October 7-11 2019 Montreal Quebec

Report by Shane Johnson

In attendance were 2039 delegates from 713 CUPE locals from across Canada, including all provinces and territories. Cupe celebrated the great achievement of now having over 700,000 members. We as a union are still growing and CUPE is now the biggest union in Canada!

Each morning began with the extra flavour of Montreal with live music in the convention hall before the day's proceedings. We had several speakers come to motivate over the week including Jagmeet Singh as well as labour leaders from both the United States and even a brave a powerful one who came all the way from Brazil.

Each morning we would be picking up handouts to show which resolutions and constitutional changes would be presented that day or which ones had passed or been defeated so we could take home print copies for our membership. One of the only and heated topics occurred early on in the week around a proposed constitutional amendment, C-15. It was defeated after a vote and then a standing vote. It seemed to be a very regional issue, with Quebec voting as a block, which did in fact defeat the motion. A motion needs a 2/3 majority to be passed if it's for a constitutional change.

The much contested C-15 was a resolution to have three extra seats at the diversity table. It seemed on the surface to be a pretty basic change and inclusion of three additional equity seeking groups. Which would in total be 5 seats from the already existing two. The proposed 5 would be Indigenous workers, LGBTQ2+, Racialized workers, Women, Workers with Disabilities. With the intention that each of these groups need a voice at the table and have an elected DVP (Diversity Vice President) to represent these groups which exist in our CUPE workplaces.

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Report by Erynne Grant

As always, I am truly grateful to the membership for sending me to attend National Convention as a 2081 delegate. I am honoured to represent our membership. Having the opportunity to connect with union activists, listen to powerful leaders doing incredible work, across our country is an honour. Being able to attend National Convention on the eve of a federal election and when the Ontario K-12 workers negotiated a deal on the eve of the province's largest strike was historic-from my perspective. Below is a quick description of highlights from convention business.

**POST-SECONDARY SECTOR MEETING**

Sunday October 6<sup>th</sup>

- Rise of hate on our post secondary campuses and how we can combat this issue
- Speaker Kimalee Philip: *Human Rights Representative*: spoke about *Migrant Rights Network*, rise of the alt-right on campus recruitment of students. This is something we need to be aware of and actively develop ways to combat the rise of hate speech under the guise of free speech.
- Discussed Resolutions: 225-230, 231-232: all important post secondary resolutions: A Time to Act: lobbying the federal government to restore funding to our sector. However, part of the challenge with advocating for increased funding, workers in our sector do not make the decisions about how funding is spent.
- As workers in the post secondary sector we are seeing an increase in precarious work: non-permanent, non-benefit positions: casual and term contracts. Increasing funding is not a guarantee that institutions will spend increased funding on workers. We need to advocate for funding AND to stop precarious work on our campuses.
- Keith Todd, President, spoke passionately for Resolution 229 to be our priority for convention floor. He was successful in motivating the sector delegates to vote in favour of this important resolution: *combating the rise of precarious work on our college and university campuses*. It is the responsibility of our union leadership to advocate for permanent jobs. Jobs that have benefits, sick time, and pensions. Our work is always under attack by corporations and conservative governments: Do More with Less....and don't expect the next generation to have access to good jobs...those are gone. We say-NO they are not! It is up to us to fight for the next generation, to fight for our members in precarious positions. Too pressure our elected officials to support workers, support our communities and stop the cuts!
- Priority resolution voted by the sector, resolution 229: passed on convention floor. We were thrilled.

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Women’s Caucus Meeting: Petty Wong and Erynne Grant attended  
Tuesday October 8

- Resolution 53 Passed: Convention voted in the affirmative *“to establish a policy and process to address complaints and incidents of sexual harassment and violence within the union, including independent third party-investigations”*.
- CUPE is not immune to the #MeToo Movement. There is still much work to be done and some distance to go. Sheryl Burns, Chair of the Women’s Committee is a passionate and fierce advocate for women’s rights in our union. I know that with her continued commitment and dedication, we will continue to make gains in this area.
- An amendment to the CUPE National Constitution, C41 will begin the work on developing changes to the Trail Procedure, and help develop an ‘alternative dispute resolution model’ to assist in resolving complaints within our union locals. When I first attended National Convention in 2015, the emotion on convention floor was intense. Delegates articulating the need for the *Trail Procedure* to be reviewed was incredibly eye-opening for me. The work of convention has resulted in steps forward. The process is not yet complete but our National Executive Board has started the work. Change takes time and this is an area that must be developed with skill, expertise and thoughtfulness.

### Diversity Seats

- Constitutional Amendment C-15 did not pass, again. However, the amendment will return! The discourse was spirited, tense and mostly regional. CUPE Quebec and CUPE New Brunswick spoke out in opposition. This amendment came to the floor when I attended my first National Convention in 2015. I am saddened that we have still not passed this important change, but I know we will get there. With continued advocacy and determination, our NEB will begin to reflect the membership we represent. Change takes time...but as in all matters: change is the only guarantee, if we remain committed to it. We must keep the conversation going and ensure our elected board reflects the membership we serve. If members do not see themselves in their union leadership, it is incumbent upon leadership to take steps to ensure everyone is represented.

### Electronic Voting is Coming!

- This will dramatically speed up voting, making better use of our time and allow for more time to be focused on debating resolutions and constitutional amendments.

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Library Awareness Campaign: Resolution 151

- Karen Renaletta, the former chair of the CUPE BC Libraries Committee, of which I am a member, has been a tireless advocate for libraries and library workers. Karen spoke with passion, stating the valuable service libraries play in harm-reduction services within our communities, as well as being centres for learning and access to information.
- Did you know CUPE BC co-sponsored the BC Summer Reading Program promoting literacy in our communities? CUPE BC's Library Committee will continue on with this good work, building upon the strong foundation that Karen started to build.

### ELECTIONS

Mark Hancock, President

Charles Fleury Secretary Treasurer

Paul Faro, GVP BC

Trevor Davies, RVP BC

Barb Nederpel, RVP BC

So many amazing guest speakers:

Jagmeet Singh: Leader Federal NDP

Sara Nelson, President Association of Flight Attendants

Geici Maiara Brig, SINTRASER, Brasil

### *FINAL THOUGHTS...*

Convention is a marathon not a sprint. The days are long and the debate can be tense, at times even difficult. However, the work we do at convention is extremely important to our National Labour movement. National convention occurs every two years. It is our union parliament. Decisions about the next two years are made at convention. CUPE is a grassroots movement and decisions are made by those elected by their membership too attend. It is important our local is represented, provincially and nationally. This is a service to our membership that I take very seriously. I am deeply grateful to the membership for sending me to national convention for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. I now have a well developed understanding of our regional and national issues. I am seeing real change in the ways we do union business, but I also see we have more to do. So many amazing activists in one room for a week, truly can change the world...one resolution at a

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# EXECUTIVE REPORT

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time. One step at a time. But, always with the same goals in mind: make our labour union better, stronger and more inclusive for all.

**Erynne Grant** | Labour Relations Officer, **Shane Johnson** | VicePresident  
**Keith Todd** | President & **Petty Wong** | Secretary Treasurer

Camosun College campuses are located on the traditional territories of the Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples. We acknowledge their welcome and graciousness to those who seek knowledge here.