

# Building Our Future Together

moveUp CONVENTION 2024

## Welcome to Day 2 of Convention 2024!

After an exhilarating opening day of Convention, it's back to work today for our delegates. Although debating resolutions dominates the bulk of today's agenda, we will have the privilege of hearing greetings from several very prominent figures in the labour movement and in politics including BC Premier David Eby and Canada's NDP leader Jagmeet Singh. Also providing greetings today are Stephen von Sychowski, president of the Vancouver & District Labour Council; Sussanne Skidmore, president of the BC Federation of Labour; and Pierrick Choinière-Lapointe, secretary-treasurer of our national union, COPE SEPB.

The most prominent topic to be discussed today will be importance of political action, and why it is critical for unions like ours to actively engage in activities such as lobbying and campaigning on important issues that related to our members' jobs and their families lives – such as pushing for improved and expanded public services and transit, fighting against attempts to privatize and outsource our jobs, combatting the climate crisis, having affordable housing available, and affordable childcare.

What is even more important, though, is how do we get our members – that is, the people in this room and all your colleagues at your workplaces – engaged to the point that they recognize the direct

impact that voting has in their lives and will do as much as they can to not only get out to the ballot box but to also talk to others, volunteer, or donate to help progressive governments get elected or re-elected.

Following the conclusion of the formal business of the day, delegates will all gather back in this same space which will be converted to host dinner. ■



Photo, left: BCFED President Sussanne Skidmore | Photo, right: BC Premier David Eby

### Political Action Matters

Today, one of the presentations that will be delivered will come from our union's Political Action Committee. They will report on the activities that our union has done over the last three-year term to support progressive candidates getting elected at all levels of government from local city councils and school boards to provincial MLAs to federal MPs.

Political action is not just an area of interest for our union. It is a core activity for our union, and many other unions like ours. While most of our members primary focus is on the things that affect them in their day-to-day work lives – issues like bargaining a new collective agreement, dealing with grievances or other workplace issues, or providing job stewards with educational opportunities to support members in their workplaces – it is our union's responsibility to our members to also look at the big picture of how things will affect them and the industries they work in and that's where political action comes into play.

Tom Duncan, now a city councillor in Duncan, was a long-time MoveUP member dating back to our days at OTEU Local 378. In fact, he was instrumental in helping our union successfully organize ICBC workers to join our union.

Tom remembers just as soon as the Social Credit Party (predecessor to today's BC United Party) returned to power after ousting the BC NDP in the 1975 provincial election, the years of battles that ensued between our union and the government just to prevent ICBC from being privatized.

"They were very free enterprise and they wanted to get rid of it," recalled Tom. "They were also quite anti-union."

Tom became heavily involved in our union's political activities because he understood the difference between having a government willing to listen to workers' concerns versus a government that couldn't care less. Even though he worked at ICBC, the most memorable union campaign he worked on was our Take Back The Power campaign in the 2000s when our union fought the privatization of power production.

"I went around and did some touring, concerts and Folk Festivals, things like that," recalled Tom. "They needed someone to do it, so usually I was the guy. It just seemed like in the early 2000s there were a lot of attacks on workers. You really didn't know what the BC Liberals were going to do to us at the time."

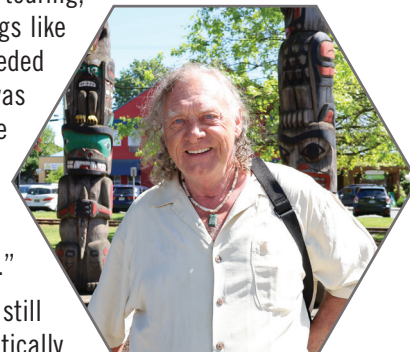
Even now, some of our members still question why our union is politically active. Those members might not be aware that Canada's labour movement helped found the New Democratic Party of Canada when the Canadian Labour Congress merged with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Our union is affiliated with the BC NDP as well.

Tom remembers being one of our union's original phone bankers in the early days of our political activism in the 1980s, and the cold feet that then-president Fred Trotter, who was in office from 1973 to 1984, developed which Tom quickly managed to warm back up.

"I remember after one of the first times we phoned our members," said Tom. "The next day I got a call from Fred Trotter, and he said we had to pull out of this phoning because he had gotten complaints. I said, 'well Fred, how many complaints did you get?' He said, 'I got four phone calls.' Well, we phoned 200 people and only four complained. I think we're on the right track."

"One of the quotes I use quite often is, 'what we're earning at the bargaining table, we have to protect at the ballot box.'"

Throughout Convention, you will hear many speakers talk about why political action matters to them and their work. We hope this will inspire you to get involved and to make sure you vote this fall in the provincial election if you are from British Columbia. ■



Photo, above: Tom Duncan



