

UNW 17th Triennial Convention Information for Delegates

Delegate Series #2: THE CONVENTION



Democratic institutions do not run themselves. They require periodic examination, and occasionally, updating or restructuring. In the case of labour unions, it is through **convention** that union members are given the opportunity to:

- examine and test the organisation's foundation and structures,
- seek an accounting from elected and appointed officers,
- determine the guidelines and policies which will govern the union between conventions.

It is a time of self-examination, debate and decision; it is a time of hard work.

Unions are created by workers who share common hopes and ideals, and who recognize that their shared goals can only be achieved by an organisation which is both responsive and accountable to its members. Although there is daily interaction between a union and its members, **it is at convention that union members determine where the union is going**. Convention is union democracy at work.

**At Convention,
union members
determine policy
relating to matters
of general or
common interest.**

**According to the
By-Laws of the UNW:
convention will be held
every 3 years, and
"The supreme
governing body of this
union shall be the
Convention."**

In keeping with democratic principles, a convention is conducted in Parliamentary fashion. Business is dealt with by way of an **agenda** that is approved by all delegates. The Convention agenda sets the **hours of sitting** and when certain matters must be attended to – for example, election of officers or presentations of committee reports. Typically, a convention day is divided into a morning and an afternoon session. Occasionally, an evening session is added, depending on the speed with which the convention is dealing with the business laid before it. Each session begins with a Credentials Committee report on the number of registered delegates in attendance.

Some union conventions include **guest speakers** throughout general sessions (the UNW generally does.) Leaders of other important Northern labour organisations may also speak as guests.

Once the gavel falls and the Convention is Called-to-Order ... the first order of business is the formal Address of the Union President (who is also the Convention Chairperson.) This is a report on his or her term of office, and includes a summary of business completed by the Union Executive since the last Convention

Following this is:

- the first report of the Credentials Committee,
- a motion to adopt the Convention Rules of Order,
- ratification of appointments to committees.

After these preliminary matters have been dealt with, Convention delegates direct their attention to the task of considering all the **resolutions** and other matters submitted by Locals and the Union Executive.

The next subject in this series will be "THE CONVENTION DELEGATE."