

Report on Attending 2016 IBEW All Canada Progress Meeting  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
May 15-19, 2016

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*“The only purpose of the Union is to serve the Membership.”*

I attended the 2016 All Canada Progress Meeting (ACPM) as a New Brunswick delegate from May 15-19, 2016. My key take-aways from the ACPM were:

1. Networking

The ACPM afforded many opportunities to network with fellow members across Canada. Beginning with day one, the membership was encouraged to circulate and meet members from other Locals to connect, discuss, share and learn from each other. Some of the very best examples of making connections and engaging brothers and sisters during the ACPM came from our very own Local. Executive Board President Steve Hayes warmly greeted everyone he met and introduced me to fellow members including International VP Bill Daniels and International President Lonnie Stephenson. When a member of Local 37 won the \$ 5000 cash prize, Steve immediately placed a personal phone call to the member to congratulate him. This is relationship building at its best! Business Manager Ross Galbraith and Business Representative Greg Wright also took every opportunity to ensure I was supported and connected during the week.

2. Learning from our Leaders

*Hassan Yussuff, Canadian Labour Congress President*

Prior to the ACPM, I felt somewhat apathetic about unions becoming involved in political issues. My view on this changed after listening to Hassan Yussuff speak. Hassan’s passion about the labour movement was evident throughout his address to the membership. His compelling message about the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) calls us to action – to support the work of the CLC in lobbying the government to find an Agreement that promotes sustainable economic development, higher labour standards and high-quality jobs for our workers and ensures that governments are also able to take a strong role in fighting climate change.

*Lonnie Stephenson, IBEW International President*

During the Utility Caucus, President Lonnie Stephenson spoke about the Green agenda and what it means for utilities and our membership in the future. Working in the Energy Efficiency side of the utility, we often get so focused on helping customers reduce their electricity consumption and save money that we can easily lose sight of the fact that transforming how we produce and consume energy will have an impact on our membership. As we build our new green economy, the IBEW will need to continue being an active participant in new “greener” job creation and better preparing our membership to adapt.

*Chris Erikson, IBEW International Executive Council Chairperson*

Chris Erikson spoke about being only the third business manager of Local 3 in Flushing, NY, since 1933. He has a rich family history in the IBEW with his grandfather filling this position from 1933-1968, his uncle from 1968-2006 and Chris from 2006 to the present. His history was especially poignant for me as my father was a union leader during his career with the Saint John Police Department. Chris shared some of the challenges his Local is experiencing including the fact that in 2014, 96 permits were issued for high rise residential builds in his area and 80 were non-union jobs. He stated, "We are in a fight but a fight we have our hands on!" He also encouraged the membership to review Article 8 of the Constitution to become better informed on the role of the International Executive Council.

### 3. Sharing Ideas, Information, and Asking Questions

*How do we promote our union to our next generation?*

Improve how we communicate with our next gen members, promote the benefits of being in our union (what's in it for me?), identify opportunities for next gen members to learn and develop into union leaders through mentoring, and identify what next gen members need and how we can best meet those needs.

*How do we engage our retirees?*

Encourage our retirees to stay working with unionized contractors, stay involved with local charities and community events, political issues, and social events. Visit employers and share what we do, what we offer, and the rules we abide by and why...to raise standards in the industry and promote quality work.

*Utility Caucus*

Minutes from the 2015 ACPM Utility Caucus Meeting were shared as well as bargaining updates, contract settlements, negotiation summaries, strategic planning for organizing workers, and Code of Excellence for utilities. Local Unions gave reports on successes and issues. Ross Galbraith provided an update for Local 37 and there was lots of interest generated amongst the membership when Ross introduced Local 37's Membership Guide.

*Elections*

Jim Watson, International Representative and educational specialist, provided local union elections training. Jim was an excellent trainer - very knowledgeable about the subject matter, provided "just enough" information, and engaged the members. He drove home the importance of "doing it right" the first time by knowing and following the rules that govern election procedures in the IBEW constitution, laws and policies, and local union bylaws. I learned that a challenged election can be very costly!

4. Generosity - The IBEW has a longstanding history of generosity of spirit and service. This was evident throughout the ACPM as leaders encouraged the membership to give generously to the residents of Fort McMurray who are devastated by the wildfires. As a result, the membership raised over \$ 2800 during the ACPM and the IBEW committed to an additional \$ 10,000. Just prior to the ACPM, my daughter was evacuated from Fort McMurray to Edmonton so the overwhelming generosity of our membership held personal meaning for me. #ymmstrong

## Next Steps

1. Share my experience and knowledge – to ensure that my participation in the ACPM is valuable (ROI), it is important that I share what I learned with the folks in my shop that didn't get to attend. This means attending all sessions during the ACPM, getting a clear understanding of the content and information shared, taking the time to answer any questions I received once I returned to work, sharing my experience in a positive manner, and championing the issues raised during the ACPM.

Prior to transitioning to NB Power on April 1, 2015, many of my co-workers were somewhat apprehensive about joining a union. They had never been part of a union before and what they knew about unions was not always positive. When we became members of Local 37, I recognized early on the positive working relationship between our Local and the employer. Attendance at the ACPM confirmed this for me as I listened to some Locals share their challenges and opportunities in establishing and maintaining positive rapport with the employer. Since the ACPM, I have shared with my colleagues my firm belief that this positive relationship is a direct result of the leadership we have at Local 37.

2. Continue to Learn - during Shop Steward training, Business Manager Ross Galbraith spoke about the importance of Shop Stewards living the Code of Excellence....of giving our best in our work. To fulfill my role as an effective Shop Steward, I will take what I learned during the ACPM and Shop Steward training and continue developing positive relationships and my knowledge of the collective agreement, constitution, bylaws, laws and policies so that I can better serve the membership.
3. Encourage women to become more involved – both the ACPM and recent Shop Steward training peaked my interest in why more women are not involved with our union. Women and men in the labour movement have a common goal that brings them together – ensuring workers' rights. So why does representation not always reflect our workplaces? As a workplace with 13 women and 1 man, I am excited to become more involved in our union. I believe that women bring unique experiences to the table and becoming more actively involved in the labour movement is empowering. As a result, I feel called to action to encourage my female colleagues to get more involved with our union by attending meetings, asking questions, weighing in on political issues, and developing into union leaders.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Local 37 for inviting me to attend the ACPM as a New Brunswick Delegate. As I embrace my new role as an IBEW Shop Steward, the knowledge gained and the connections made during the ACPM will serve me well.

In solidarity,



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IBEW Code of Excellence  
"Safety, Professionalism, First Choice"