

Women's Conference 2016 – Debbie Barry Delegate Report

I would like to express my greatest gratitude to our President Stephen Hayes for giving me the opportunity to attend the 2016 IBEW International Women's Conference "Sisters in Solidarity", June 21-24, 2016.

This is the first conference I have attended on behalf of the Union and was overwhelmed with the energy in the rooms. The breakout sessions were very informative and empowering.

Among the sessions I attended were "Lobbying Works! Getting Workers' Issues on the Political Agenda. This was an inspiring session put on by Kate Walsh. I knew our Unions stand up together to create fair pay, safe working practices, good benefits, amongst a few. However, this is also for the whole of the country. Kate had just been informed that one of their lobbying efforts "A better CPP is possible" was just approved and will be increased next year and hopefully in the following years, which will affect ALL Canadians. What a win for all, as we all have relatives or friends we know who do not have pensions and struggle to make ends meet at retirement. We also, spoke on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) which they are currently lobbying against. If this goes through it will open our doors to enable eleven other countries the right to work in Canada creating a multinational trade agreement. As we all are aware our unemployment is at an all time high already, this would create higher unemployment, lower wages and growing income inequality. I could go on and on about this, however will try to keep this short.



It was a good opportunity for me to network and promote our local.



I also, was part of the closing plenary session – A Special Presentation “We Were There”. I portrayed Lady Jones (Mary Harris Jones), the most famous female labor leader of the nineteenth century. This was very much out of my comfort zone, however I wanted to make our Local visible and a part of the Conference.

I am truly grateful for this opportunity and hope that our Local continues to support this conference with increased numbers from our female union members.

