

Ontario NextGen Conference 2016
Toronto, Ontario October 28-30
Ali Rossiter's Conference Report

I would like to give a big thank you to the Local for allowing me to be a delegate at the 2016 Ontario NextGen Conference! I wasn't sure what to expect, but I was pleasantly surprised by the event. It was very welcoming from the start – they opened the conference with a networking reception which gave all the NextGen-ers an opportunity to meet other young members from across Eastern Canada and Ontario. There were many friendly faces, many of which were IBEW International Representatives.

Saturday was a day filled with a wide range of speakers including Hassan Yussuff of the Canadian Labour Congress, Andrea Horwath the leader of the Ontario NDP, NDP MPP Jennifer French, IBEW members that helped kick off the Build Together initiative (women in the building trades), and a few others. The theme was clear – each speaker tied their presentation back to the importance of young people getting involved with the union. Whether that be through political action, starting committees, getting members involved in the community, or simply through attending unit meetings. It was motivating for me to listen to the stories of how each of these people got their start – and that was through getting involved in their respective unions or associations.

There were also some afternoon workshops to choose from. I attended *IBEW History and Structure* where I learned more about how the IBEW started and how it is organized. This was a nice refresher course for me, and it was timely with the launch the Code of Excellence, which includes a brief history of the IBEW.

The following day kicked off with more workshops, which I was really looking forward to. I attended *NextGen Committee Building* led by International Reps Kate Walsh and Rachel Bryan. I found this workshop to be very helpful for me to wrap my head around how to effectively build and maintain a committee. It also helped me develop a month-by-month plan for the NextGen committee, and it also gave me some information on how to keep things going. They handed out the Drexler/Sibbet Team Performance Model diagram which is a step-by-step diagram that helps individuals create and sustain teams, which will be a helpful tool for me to reference as things get going again.

The conference closed with an extremely powerful message on safety. Spencer Beach, a former floor layer, found himself trapped in a house engulfed in flames from a chemical fire resulting in over 90% of his body having 3rd degree chemical burns. As an IBEW member and a new home owner, this safety talk really hit home for me, and it was clear that it hit home for all the other conference attendees. I would highly recommend Spencer as a keynote for a safety-related function.

Overall it was a great conference, I learned a lot and met some great IBEW brothers and sisters. I look forward attending another NextGen conference and getting our NextGen Committee off the ground again. Thanks for the opportunity.