



**2009 Labour Day Message
from
Lana Payne
President – NLFL**

As President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL) – representing 65,000 working women and men in every sector of the economy and every community of our province – it is my honour to extend a message of solidarity this Labour Day.

Working people and their unions have made a significant contribution to Canadian and Newfoundland and Labrador society.

We have a more compassionate and just world because of the struggles of the labour movement. The right to a healthy and safe workplace, to medicare, to unemployment insurance, to paid holidays and vacation, to public pensions, to living wages and maternity and parental leave - these were all fought for by unions and our movement.

As you know, this has been an extremely difficult year for many working people and their families across the country and at home.

Since last October, the job loss as a result of the global financial meltdown and economic recession has been staggering. In our own province, the biggest impact has been in those sectors that dominate our rural Newfoundland and Labrador economy, including the forestry and fishing industries.

This economic crisis erupted because of astounding irresponsibility, greed and mismanagement on the part of the financial and banking sector. Just as destructive has been the failure of governments and regulators to do their job and impose sensible limits and controls on private finance and protect working people, their families and communities from that greed.

Greed and inaction have caused incredible hardship for so many. And yet the response from the corporate elite – such as we see in the recent strike at Voisey's Bay, Labrador is to use the recession as a hammer against workers; to attack collective agreements; and blame workers for the problem. This is unacceptable and must be challenged at every turn.



We see the same kind of response from our federal government including when the minister responsible for the country's unemployed refused to fix employment insurance because she didn't want to make the EI system "too lucrative." And we see it when Stephen Harper uses the power of Parliament to attack women's equality and pay equity.

The cuts to Employment Insurance in the 1990s are one of the reasons we have the weakest social safety net of any recession since the 1930s. We have the weakest protection for the unemployed. We have the worst personal savings rate since the Great Depression. We have record levels of household debt and bankruptcies are up 50% since June of last year.

And in less than nine months 450,000 Canadians have been laid off from their full-time jobs, including several thousand in our own province.

Despite this economic devastation, there is hope – hope that we can build a better economic system out of the ashes of the one that has caused so much carnage. And I have hope because all across our planet, working people are fighting back against this crisis – demanding fair treatment and protection from job loss; fighting for better economic and social policies so this does not happen again.

This Labour Day while we celebrate the many economic and social achievements of the trade union movement, we must also prepare for the tough battles ahead.

Every day I am reminded why working people need unions; why society needs unions. I am reminded that our fight for a better world is by no means over.

Those who are using the recession as an excuse to attack unions and the things we have fought for and stand for must be challenged.

Working people who aspired to earn decent wages and good benefits so their kids could have a better life did not cause this recession. Their hard-fought collective agreements did not cause it and attacking those agreements will not solve this economic crisis.

This Labour Day we must strengthen our resolve to fight for good jobs for all in both the public and private sectors including investing in green jobs and the green economy, for decent income replacement and training supports when people lose their jobs, and for adequate pensions and dignity in retirement. No one should be left behind in good economic times or bad. That will continue to be our mission. We will fight this crisis and in doing so continue to build a better, fairer and more equitable world.



This Labour Day make a difference. Commit or re-commit to building a better world based on values of social and economic justice, equality and dignity.

On behalf of the 65,000 members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, our Executive Council and Staff, please have a safe and happy Labour Day weekend.

In solidarity,

Lana Payne
President
Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Labour

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