



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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NL Federation of Labour convention to mark 75 years of unions working together to make a difference

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour will celebrate 75 years of solidarity, resistance and struggle during its annual convention being held at Hotel Gander, November 6-8.

NLFL President Lana Payne said the province's labour history is rich and vibrant. "Unions have made this province a better place. We have successfully fought for laws that make our workplaces safer. We have advocated for a fairer world where the wealth from our economy is shared. We pushed for and achieved great changes in our workplaces and we have advanced women's economic equality. We have been a progressive force for change. We have plenty to celebrate."

One of the convention's panels will reflect on our history and what we can learn from it. It will include guest speakers Richard Cashin (founder of the province's fisheries union) and Ed Finn (a former Newfoundland journalist and trade union activist who headed up the Newfoundland Democratic Party in the middle of the last century).

In addition, there will be panels and speakers who will discuss the challenges facing today's labour movement, its unions and their members as well as the concerns being raised by young workers.

Guest speakers and panellists at the convention also include Hassan Yussuff (Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress, Jim Sinclair (President of the BC Federation of Labour), Larry Brown (Secretary-Treasurer NUPGE), Leanne MacMillan (Pension expert - CUPE) and Jeff Callaghan (CUPW).

"The attack we are seeing on unionized workers at the bargaining table as well as the full-out assault on labour rights by the Harper government will certainly be a topic of much debate at our convention," said Ms. Payne. "I expect that the discussion will be more than lamenting the anti-labour direction of the federal government, it will also include looking at how we fightback."

330 Portugal Cove Place, NAPE Bldg., 2nd Floor

P.O. Box 8597 St John's, NL A1B 3P2 Telephone: 709 754 1660 Fax: 709 754 1220 www.nlfl.nf.ca



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In addition, this convention will be about building for the future. For the first time in history, despite all the so-called opportunities posed by a tightening labour market, the next generation of workers face the real possibility of not doing better than their parents did. "This is a shameful outcome when you consider just how much economic wealth is being siphoned off in corporate profits or accumulated by the richest in society. But it doesn't have to be this way."

On Tuesday, convention delegates will hear from Prof. Travis Fast of the University of Laval who specializes in political economy and labour market policy.

Dr. Fast has been engaged by the NL Federation of Labour to examine the province's economic wealth, how it is being shared or not being shared and to work with the Federation in presenting a vision for building an even better Newfoundland and Labrador.

"We have so many opportunities now in our province, but we must ensure people are able to take advantage of those opportunities and we must also ensure we are getting our fair share of the economic pie. The development of our resources must benefit all citizens and building a society where no one gets left behind must be our ultimate goal," said the labour leader.

There will also be a tribute to Labour Leader Nancy Riche, who passed away this fall. Ms. Riche made an important and outstanding contribution to both the Newfoundland and Labrador and Canadian labour movements. "She fought for economic and social justice and women's equality every day of her life and we will honour that fighting spirit during our convention."

In addition, NDP Leader Lorraine Michael, buoyed by her party's recent electoral success, will address delegates on Tuesday. She will be joined by the NDP caucus.

A more detailed convention agenda is attached. Please note that NLFL President Lana Payne will address delegates Monday, November 7 @ 9:30 am.

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Contact: NLFL President Lana Payne @754-1660 or 743-5343.

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