



Labour Day A Day To Acknowledge The Contributions Of Working People

For many people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada, Labour Day symbolizes the end of summer, the last long weekend to get away, and the beginning of a new school year.

For those of us in the labour movement and for thousands of working people, Labour Day is the one day of the year where we get to reflect upon and celebrate those important struggles that resulted in major gains for working people, their families, and communities.

Labour day has been celebrated in Canada since the 1880's and while many people think of the historic struggles endured by all workers for better working conditions, (such as the eight hour day, 40 hour work week, pensions, and the other workplace benefits we take for granted), the fight for improved working conditions still goes on today.

It is without doubt that when workers unite and collectively engage in political action on those issues that benefit all workers, we can bring about positive change for all working people, union and non-union. It means that when unions stand up for fairness, everyone benefits!

In the past year the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL) and our affiliated unions fought for and won increased compensation for injured workers. The NLFL (along with affiliates and community partners) also advocated for and won changes to both the definition of family violence and the Residential Tenancies Act. Both were part of increasing the recognition of the impact on victims of domestic violence. There is still much work to be done in this area. The Federation has been pushing government to address domestic violence at work by presenting amendments to several laws and regulations.



We continue to advocate on the issues that impact the lives of all working people such as for better occupational health and safety (OHS) regulations in the workplace, higher minimum wages, pharmacare, improved gender equity, and equality. In fact, given the challenges facing our province today and into the future, the role of the labour movement in bringing about progressive social and economic change has never been more important. Issues such as increasing unemployment, poverty, climate change, aging and declining populations along with the retention of our youngest and brightest are all issues where organized labour will play a major role.

One key area where the labour movement will focus its collective energy is on the need for better labour laws in our province. We desperately need improved labour legislation and laws that address the employment realities that today's workers face, such as prolonged labour disputes like we have seen with the locked out workers at DJ Composites.

Labour Day is about celebrating the sacrifices working people have made along the way to ensure greater and shared prosperity in our country. But it is also about recognizing and preparing for the challenges we have in front of us. Making sure that we collectively bring improvements to the economic and social well being of all workers.

It is about celebrating and acknowledging the contributions that all workers make to our economy and our communities. Aside from working in their chosen career, they also volunteer in their communities, serve on municipal councils, coach minor hockey, fund-raise for community organizations and other important activities that help shape and sustain a community.



This Labour Day lets remember and acknowledge the struggle and gains made by those workers that came before us; but lets also take the time to acknowledge and thank all working women and men for the important contributions they make to our economy and society.

This Labour Day, let's make sure we acknowledge, honour, and respect the contributions of all hard-working people.

Mary Shortall
President
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