



Newsletter

Labour Day: a proud tradition for Canadian workers

HEU MEMBERS WILL join other trade unionists at various events across the province on Labour Day – September 4 – to celebrate victories and recognize past and present struggles in our nation's labour movement.

Over several decades, trade unions have worked hard to improve the lives of Canadians and their families by advancing such basic rights as the eight-hour work day, paid vacations and statutory holidays, maternity and parental leaves, workplace health and safety protections, and decent wages and benefits.

And by working together with social activists and community groups, unions have helped secure medicare, pensions, unemployment insurance and other key human rights.

“It's important to mark occasions like Labour Day that observe the many accomplishments made in the labour movement over the decades,” says HEU president Fred Muzin.

But he says these hard-won successes continue to be challenged by federal and provincial governments who enact anti-worker legislation like bills 29 and 37.

“There's still a lot of work ahead of us,” says Muzin. “We need to be vigilant in ensuring all Canadian workers are treated fairly and have their legally bargained collective agreements protected and enforced.”

The history of Labour Day is deeply rooted in Canada. On April 15, 1872, thousands of union demonstrators and supporters took to the streets of Toronto to demand better working conditions and protest the imprisonment of 24 union leaders arrested for going on strike. In those days, trade unions were illegal and job action a crime punishable by law, or even death, in North America.

Subsequently, during a workers' demonstration in Ottawa a few months after Toronto's milestone rally, then-prime minister Sir John A. Macdonald vowed to abolish Canada's barbaric labour laws, and by year's end fulfilled that promise.

The Parliament of Canada granted Labour Day national holiday status in 1894 – moving it from April to the first Monday of September.

For Labour Day events in your community, contact your district labour council.

August 30, 2006

