

# **UNITED STEELWORKERS**



**UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS**

**STRONG, PROUD AND DIVERSE**

The United Steelworkers is Canada's most diverse union, representing men and women working in every sector of the economy. We are the largest private sector union in both Canada and North America with more than 225,000 members in Canada and more than 800,000 members continent-wide.

This is our day to celebrate the struggles and accomplishments of all Canadian workers.

On behalf of the United Steelworkers and Local 7916 we want to take this time to wish all working people in all sectors of the Canadian workforce a safe and happy labor day.

**USW Local 7916**



# 1872 demonstrations in Canada led to rights we enjoy today

In a time when workers' rights are taken for granted and even workers' benefits have come to be expected, it's no wonder that the origins of Labour Day are confined to the history books. What evolved into just another summer holiday began as a working class struggle and massive demonstration of solidarity in the streets of Toronto.

Canada was changing rapidly during the second half of the 19th century. Immigration was increasing, cities were getting crowded, and industrialization was drastically altering the country's economy and workforce.

As machines began to replace or automate many work processes, employees found they no longer had special skills to offer employers. Workers could easily be replaced if they complained or dissented and so were often unable to speak out against low wages, long work weeks and deplorable working conditions.

This is the context and setting for what is generally considered Canada's first Labour Day event in 1872. At the time, unions were il-



A Labor Day procession in Winnipeg in 1908.

legal in Canada, which was still operating under an archaic British law already abolished in England.

For over three years the Toronto Printers Union had been lobbying its employers for a shorter work week. Inspired by workers in Hamilton who had begun the movement for a nine-hour work day, the Toronto printers threatened to strike if their demands weren't met. After repeatedly being ignored by their employers, the workers took bold action and on March 25, 1872, they went on strike.

Toronto's publishing industry was paralyzed and the printers soon had the support of other workers.

On April 14, a group of 2,000 workers marched through the streets in a show of solidarity. They picked up even more supporters along the way and by the time they reached their destination of Queen's Park, their parade had 10,000 participants—one tenth of the city's population.

The employers were forced to take notice. Led by George Brown, founder of the Toronto Globe and notable Liberal, the publishers retaliated. Brown brought in workers from nearby towns to replace the printers. He even took legal action to quell the strike and had the strike leaders charged and arrested for criminal con-

spiracy.

Conservative Prime Minister John A. Macdonald was watching the events unfold and quickly saw the political benefit of siding with the workers. Macdonald spoke out against Brown's actions at a public demonstration at City Hall, gaining the support of the workers and embarrassing his Liberal rival. Macdonald passed the Trade Union Act, which repealed the outdated British law and decriminalized unions. The strike leaders were released from jail.

The workers still did not obtain their immediate goals of a shorter work week. In fact, many still lost their job. They did, however, discover how to regain the power they lost in the industrialized economy. Their strike proved that workers could gain the attention of their employers, the public, and most importantly, their political leaders if they worked together. The "Nine-Hour Movement," as it became known, spread to other Canadian cities and a shorter work week became the primary demand of union workers in the years follow-

ing the Toronto strike.

The parade that was held in support of the strikers carried over into an annual celebration of worker's rights and was adopted in cities throughout Canada. The parades demonstrated solidarity, with different unions identified by the colorful banners they carried. In 1894, under mounting pressure from the working class, Prime Minister Sir John Thompson declared Labour Day a national holiday.

Over time, Labour Day strayed from its origins and evolved into a popular celebration enjoyed by the masses. It became viewed as the last celebration of summer, a time for picnics, barbecues and shopping.

No matter where you find yourself this Labour Day, take a minute to think about Canada's labour pioneers. Their actions laid the foundations for future labour movements and helped workers secure the rights and benefits enjoyed today.

## Labour Day 2020

*On this Labour Day more than ever we acknowledge those who continue to provide their services working hard. We appreciate their contribution to our economy.*

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**DR. ROBERT KITCHEN MP**  
Souris-Moose Mountain

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## SGEU: Pandemic brings importance of labour movement to the forefront

Each year on the first Monday in September, people across the country celebrate Labour Day. This year will look a little different, with fewer BBQs and community gatherings, but it remains important to reflect on how far we have come and what we still have to achieve.

The past several months have shown the importance of unions and the labour movement in every aspect of our society. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the valuable role that workers across the province play in safeguarding our health, safety, and well-being. Many of the people who are deemed essential workers—those who are on the front lines keeping us fed, our health care facilities clean, and our communities functioning and safe—remain some of the lowest paid in Saskatchewan. The crisis we are in should challenge the way we put value on labour and spur us to continue seeking fair pay for all workers.

This pandemic has also highlighted the right to a safe workplace. There are many people across the province who have returned or will be returning to work and are unsure or fearful about the conditions they'll face. With schools across the province opening and the very real possibility of a second wave of outbreaks, many are worried that their



SGEU President Bob Bymo

work puts them and their families at risk. We cannot continue to force people to choose between their health and their livelihood.

While we can celebrate the progress

that has been made through the years, such as an eight-hour work day, minimum wage, health benefits, parental leave, sick leave, and occupational health and safety laws, it is also a time to

recognize the work that remains to create a more equitable Saskatchewan.

Those in the labour movement have long fought for economic security and fairness in the workplace but equally have worked to ensure social justice, equality, and respect for everyone in our communities.

I am tremendously proud of how the 20,000 members of SGEU have collectively navigated the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on their professional and personal lives. Whether they work in health care, corrections, social services, education, Crown corporations, retail regulatory, or in the many other public, non-profit, and private sector workplaces SGEU represents, SGEU members have continued to deliver high-quality, reliable services under challenging and constantly changing conditions. Our members are also your family members, friends, neighbours, coaches, and volunteers. They continue to work toward a safe, fair and strong province, whether at their workplace or in their communities.

On behalf of SGEU and its members, I wish you all a happy Labour Day.

In Solidarity,  
**Bob Bymo, SGEU President**

**LIUNA!** Local 180  
Labourers' International Union of North America



LIUNA Local 180 would like to thank the hard working people of Saskatchewan this Labour Day. Together we will continue the fight for safer working conditions and better wages

**306.525.2336**  
**www.local180.ca**

**LIUNA LOCAL 180**  
2206 E Emmett Hall Road  
Regina, SK S4N 3M3

Let's create a more  
**EQUITABLE**  
**SASKATCHEWAN**



A lack of paid sick days and the low wages earned by countless public-facing workers means that many can't afford to stay home when they need to. Let this Labour Day be a reminder that no worker should be forced to choose between their health and their livelihood.

# IRONWORKERS

## LOCAL UNION NO. 771

### *Strength in Membership!*

The origins of Labour Day can be traced back to April 15, 1872. No matter where you find yourself this Labour Day, take a minute to think about Canada's labour pioneers.

Their actions laid the foundations for future labour movements and helped workers secure the rights and benefits enjoyed today.

We believe that every worker should be entitled to a fair day's wage, benefits and a pension plan, that will ensure that their family will live happy and healthy long after you retire from a proud career.



[www.local771.ca](http://www.local771.ca)



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# Labour Day: the holiday Canada gave the world

Welcome to Labour Day, the holiday that is so much a part of our culture that Canadians rarely pause to consider its true purpose and meaning.

Today, Labour Day is often more associated with fairs and festivals, and a last summer weekend at the cottage, than with what it was meant to be—a heartfelt celebration of workers and their families.

That's too bad, but perhaps not surprising. In a way, the holiday has become a victim of the labour movement's enduring success in improving the lives of working Canadians.

Today we take paid holidays, safe work places, medical care, unemployment insurance, fair hours, union wages and 'the weekend' for granted. But how many of these advances would have happened if it were not for the long-forgotten heroes who fought so hard to make unions, and Labour Day, a reality in the first place?

Labour Day began in Canada on April 15, 1872, a mere five years after Confederation. On that historic day the Toronto Trades Assembly, the original central labour body in Canada, organized the country's first significant 'workers demonstration.'

At the time trade unions were still illegal, and authorities still tried to repress them, even though laws against "criminal conspiracy" to disrupt trade unions had already been abolished in Britain.

Despite the obstacles, the assembly had emerged as an important force in Toronto. It spoke out on behalf of working people, encouraged union organization and acted as a watchdog when workers were exploited. Occasionally, it also mediated disputes between employers and employees.

By the time the landmark parade was organized in 1872 the assembly had a membership of 27 unions, representing wood workers, builders, carriage makers and metal workers, plus an assortment of other trades ranging from bakers to cigar makers.

One of the prime reasons for organizing the demonstration was to demand the release of 24 leaders of the Toronto Typographical Union (TTU), who had been imprisoned for the "crime" of striking to gain a nine-hour working day.

The event took on a life of its own and was one that authorities could not ignore.

Held on Thanksgiving Day, which was then observed in the spring, the parade featured throngs of workers and a crowd

estimated at 10,000 Torontonians who applauded as the unionists marched proudly through the streets, accompanied by four bands. In speeches that followed, trade union leaders demanded freedom for the TTU prisoners and better conditions for all workers.

It was a defining moment in Canadian labour history, opening the door to the formation of the broader Canadian labour movement over the next decade and sowing the roots of what is now an annual workers' holiday around the world.

The Toronto parade inspired leaders in Ottawa to stage a similar event. A few months later, on September 3, 1872, seven unions in the nation's capital organized a parade more than a mile long, headed by an artillery band and flanked by city fireman.

The Ottawa parade passed the home of Sir John A. MacDonald, the prime minister. He was hoisted into a carriage and taken to City Hall where, by torch light, he made a ringing promise to sweep away "such barbarous laws" as those invoked to imprison the TTU workers in Toronto.

The 'Old Chieftain' kept his word. Before the year was out the hated laws were gone from the statute books in Canada.

In 1873 the Toronto Trades Assembly called a national convention and set up the first national central organization, the Canadian Labour Union (CLU), which in 1886 became the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLC), which was one of the forerunners of the present Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), now the major national labour or-

ganization in Canada.

Labour Day celebrations in the United States began in the 1880s, inspired by the beginnings made in Canada.

Initially, Labour Day was celebrated in the spring but that did not last long. After it was declared a legal holiday by the Parliament of Canada on July 23, 1894, the celebration was moved to the early fall, where it has remained ever since.

Around the world today Labour Day is celebrated at different times. In Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia it is known as "May Day" - or International Workers' Day - and it is celebrated on May 1. In New Zealand, it is held on the fourth Monday in October, and in Australia the date varies from state to state across the country.

But wherever it is celebrated, the purpose remains the same. In the

same spirit it began so many years ago, it remains a day that affirms the dig-

nity and honour of working people everywhere. NUPGE

## Steven Bonk, MLA Moosomin

306-435-4005

*This Labour Day I would like to salute the working men and women of Saskatchewan and thank them for the huge contribution you make to your communities and to our province's economy.*



## We are Canada's Postmasters and Assistants

**With a membership of 8,000 strong, we operate over 3,200 rural post offices across Canada. 95% of CPAA members are women.**

During the pandemic, our post offices have stayed open and we have remained steadfast at our jobs, faithfully serving you, the public. Our post offices are central to the communities we live in. We know our customers as our neighbours, our families, and our friends. We work tirelessly to make sure the mail gets through.

This pandemic has shown us that postal services are more essential than ever for rural Canadians to stay connected to the rest of the world.

Our jobs are vitally important, and we are proud of the work we do. We will keep striving to bring more services to our communities and safeguard the services we already offer.

**On this Labour Day, know that your local Postmaster and rural post offices are working hard for you. We welcome your support.**

Canadian Postmasters  
and  
Assistants Association



L'Association canadienne  
des maîtres  
de poste et adjoints

[cpaask.org](http://cpaask.org)