



Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, CLC

September 2, 2011

A Labour Day Message from Rick Clarke, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

Halifax - We gather today to think about and honour the contributions working people have made to make this province and country a better place to live. It is because of our determination and unity that we have been able to fight for and maintain so many valuable public services and so much more... contributions and gains made that should never be forgotten or taken for granted; on the risk of losing them.

Workers and their organizations have been at the forefront in the fight for better health care, accessible and affordable education, housing, pensions, a realistic minimum wage, improved human rights, workers' compensation, social programs and job creation.

Our work and challenges are far from over and our economy is far from being stable - we are experiencing job losses in a number of sectors; with a potential crisis facing us in the pulp and paper industry; and many of our public services and benefits gained are being threatened.

We must commit ourselves to the struggle of not only maintaining these valuable social services, benefits and jobs but make improvements to better our futures.

We are very watchful and concerned with the news concerning the NewPage Mill in Port Hawkesbury - if that mill closes even temporarily; it will have a major negative impact not only on the 1000 workers directly affected but also on their families, communities and the provincial economy.

Although not currently at the root of this crisis; power costs continue to be a problem in our province. A problem that is or has the potential to undermine the viability of this and other similar operations; not to mention the negative impact these high costs are having on the average consumer.

Perhaps it is time to renew the debate on whether the providing of power through the private for profit monopoly is in the best interest of consumers and Nova Scotia or should we consider the service again be provided by a Crown Corporation.

We are very aware and appreciative that Premier Dexter has been on top of this potential crisis but given the possibility of similar announcements from other operations that may face similar circumstances, we believe that we collectively need to develop a plan or strategy to be able to respond quickly and fully on such threats. This is not a time; nor an issue for political statements or finger pointing - it is a time for collective commitment and action.

We are all in this together and together we must focus on finding ways not only to survive this turbulent time, but also to look for opportunities we can begin to plan for and capitalize on as we find ways, to meet the demands of tomorrow.

Our Federal Government can and should play a leadership role to assist and support Provincial Governments faced with job loses and closures that are being brought on by the tough economic times we are in.

When our National and provincial economies are struggling to survive and come out of a recessionary climate; now is not the time for belt tightening, spending cuts or tax breaks – now is the time for investing in families, jobs, communities and our futures.

Unfortunately; families, jobs, communities and our futures do not appear a priority for the Harper Government as they take us down a road of spending cuts which means the loss of jobs and services, not to mention their clear intent to attack and undermine worker and union rights - while at the same time providing huge tax cuts for their corporate friends. Such actions during a recessionary period can and have resulted in deepening or slowing recovery from the recession.

We are in for a struggle and we need to be ready to fight the Conservative government's plans to gut federal spending by \$4 billion, only to hand \$4 billion in tax cuts to corporations. It's time to come together as workers and in our communities to oppose reckless and dangerous cuts to crucial public services.

We must never let our government forget that real people are hurt when they lose their jobs. Widespread layoffs and cuts to pensions destroy communities. This creates a human deficit that is far more destructive than any fiscal deficit.

Last year, on this Day we talked about and committed that we must continue to press the Federal Government to solve the problem with Canada's retirement income system—that need and commitment has not changed.

We desperately need to increase CPP benefits, boost low-income (GIS) public pensions so no senior lives in poverty, and introduce federal pension insurance to protect our hard-earned retirement savings.

Workplace Health and Safety continues to be a serious issue. In 2010 there were 23 workplace fatalities in Nova Scotia; over 120 workers have died in the past five years in Nova Scotia.— it is abundantly clear that workplace Health and Safety must be taken more seriously in this province.

Penalties alone will not solve this crisis, there has to be better training, education and enforcement; and as with drinking and driving; it must become socially unacceptable to see preventable workplace injuries and deaths

On a more positive note; our Federation has been active since Day one of the Ships Start Here campaign. For those who may not know much about it:

Halifax Shipyard is in the running to become one of two major suppliers of shipbuilding to the Canadian government as a result of the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy. No shipyard in Canada is better poised to meet this challenge and opportunity. It will mean over 11,000 long-term jobs.

Nova Scotia is home to generations of highly skilled shipbuilders with world class training and experience. When you look at the yard, you'll see two, three and sometimes four generations of workers. No one has access to the skill level that we do, right here. And strong partnerships with local community colleges and apprenticeship programs will mean secure jobs for the next generation of shipbuilders.

This contract would mean thousands of new jobs in Nova Scotia for a new generation of shipbuilders. Many families can return home and start a life here in Nova Scotia because of a stable shipbuilding industry. These federal shipbuilding contracts would be a game changer for Nova Scotia and all of Canada.

This October, Federation Affiliates from across the province will gather at our 46th Convention in Dartmouth. Our theme this year is: **Proud to be union: Making a difference in our workplaces, our communities and in our province.**

On this Labour Day we have a lot to be proud of, but most importantly, as we celebrate Labour Day, let's remember we can all make a difference in making life better for Nova Scotians.

As we all know only too well; on August 22nd we lost much a great Canadian, a staunch supporter and promoter of human rights and workers rights, a visionary a statesman and a friend – Brother Jack Layton was all this and more.

Jack has left us with a wonderful legacy to support and build on this seems to be a very fitting place to pay a tribute to Jack and his legacy leaving a message:

As Jack wrote in his final letter to Canadians:

**My friends, love is better than anger.
Hope is better than fear.
Optimism is better than despair.
So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic.
And we'll change the world.**

On behalf of the Executive Council, staff and the 70,000 affiliated members of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour I would like to wish all an enjoyable and safe Labour Day weekend.

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For more information, please call Rick Clarke at: 454.6735 (office) or 434.5612 (home)

CAW Local 4005