

FALL 2017

Newfoundland &  
Labrador Edition



**NEW**

# Workers' Voice

independent. influential.  
relevant. balanced.



**The Rally for  
FREE EDUCATION**

**SILICOSIS** in Mining

**RAISE** the  
**MINIMUM WAGE**

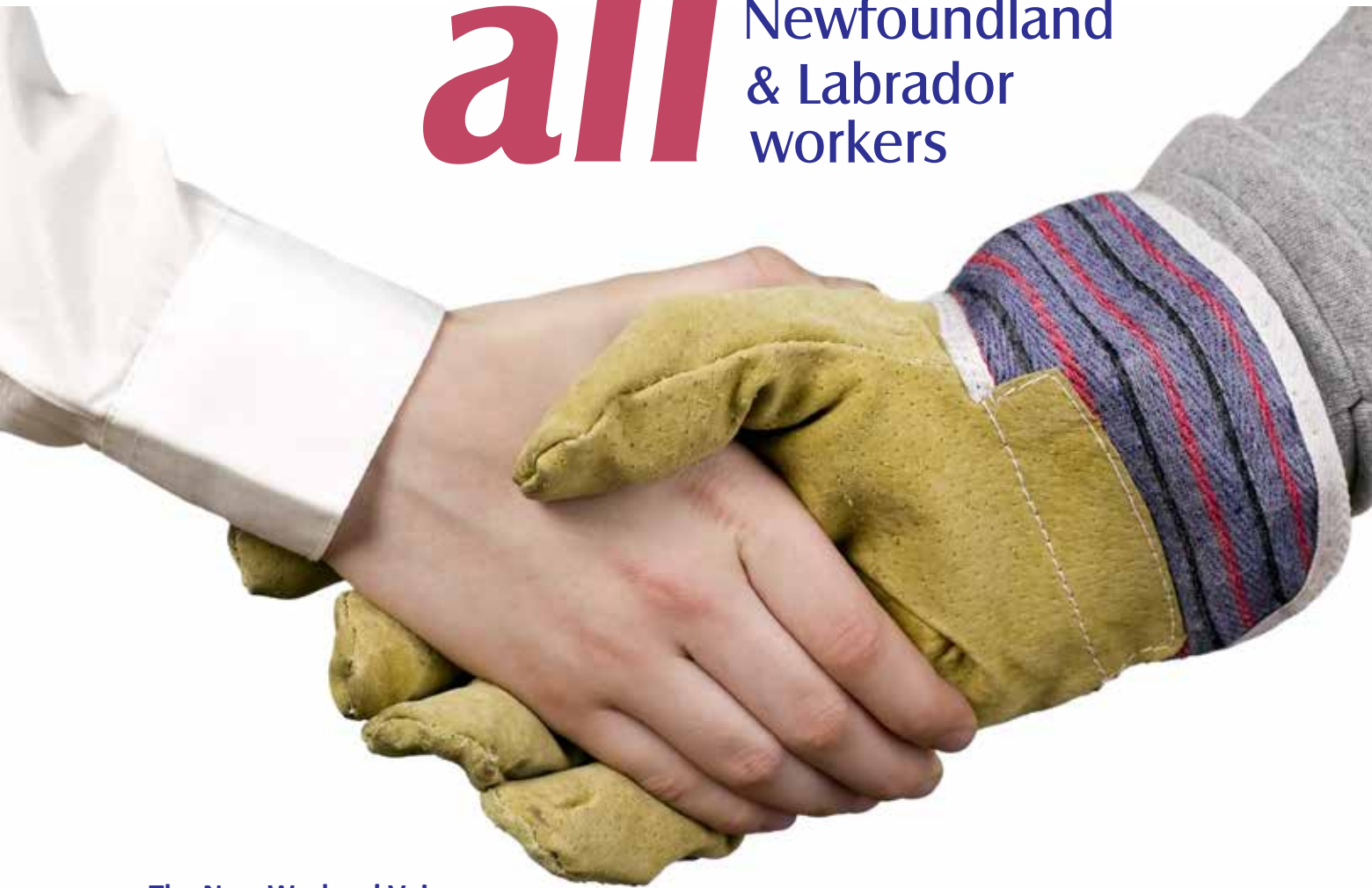


**MUN Study on REMOTE WORKERS**  
**MARIJUANA** in the **WORKPLACE**

**2017**  
**LABOUR DAY**

**Dean  
Ingram**  
**President**  
of the  
Newfoundland  
and Labrador  
Teachers'  
Association

# *Reach* out to *all* Newfoundland & Labrador workers



The New Workers' Voice,  
Newfoundland and Labrador  
online edition, is a free forum  
for all.

We welcome suggestions for  
Newfoundland and Labrador  
stories, features and guest  
columns. We accept letters to  
the editor and other input you  
would like to have in the  
**New Workers' Voice.**



[workersvoice@outlook.com](mailto:workersvoice@outlook.com)

**NEW**  
**Workers' Voice**  
independent. influential.  
relevant. balanced.

Established in 2001 as the Workers' Voice Magazine print edition, now the online Newfoundland & Labrador Edition of New Workers' Voice Magazine, is a free magazine for all.

It is for Newfoundland and Labrador workers, unions, associations, students, business owners, managers and government decision makers and anyone else involved in, or concerned with, workplace issues.

Providing independent context and understanding of workplace issues, we are pro-worker and pro-economic development, both private and public. Articles are aimed at worker progress, social justice, safety and education along with the issues and the personalities involved.

An independent publication, we receive no funding from any government, association, union, agency, political party or individual, as such, our revenue is entirely advertising based.

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FALL 2017 Volume 1, Number 2

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Newfoundland &  
Labrador Edition





## 'Hey, Managers . . . every ship needs a captain!'

by Ralph Winsor

**A**s a boy, I worked for my father as a carpenter's helper, as did my brothers. Working alongside my father was not for the feeble in body or spirit but it was where we learned about leadership and hard work. Born in Bonavista Bay in 1912, he hailed from a time when working was more than just making a living, it meant the difference between life and death.

Dad, having been to sea during the 1930's as a fisherman, sealer and merchant mariner during the war was a no nonsense type. He was fond of saying, "if six men go to sea in a small boat, and no one is captain, no one would get back alive." He believed and lived leadership and all that it entailed.

He was an incredible worker and expected no less from his son of 15 years, or anyone else on the job site. He led by example and could outwork anyone. Knowing Dad's background, we understood what drove him to be that way, and we followed the leader and pushed to keep up.

Since those days I have worked under and dealt with many managers. Many of them that I have dealt with and many of them that I interact with to this day, are leaders, but sadly, many are not.

There are those who show natural leadership abilities and can skilfully motivate employees to give their best. They command respect because they demonstrate that they care about the organization as well as the well-being of those employees in their charge. They know the job, understand people and most importantly, lead by example. As leaders they know they are responsible for the morale and professional development of the workers under them.

Today, in far too many workplaces, there are those in position of authority who have no idea how to manage. Having somehow meandered into a position of authority, they are either ill-qualified or

disinterested in taking any real command of their vessel and chose rather to 'lay low' and try to stay under the radar.

This is the mode they adopt, believing inaction is safer than action; they avoid making decisions that may carry the risk of fall-out. By not ruffling feathers, they feel secure in their position with hope of retaining the pay, privilege and perks that come with the position.

Unfortunately, this concern with self-preservation, is both short-sighted and ultimately destructive, impacting the entire company or organisation.

Many of these 'managers' have found their way into positions of authority not because of merit but because of seniority or connections. Lack of confidence coupled with fear of failure cause them to pass up wonderful opportunities to give recognition to those under them. Their inability, or worse, unwillingness to motivate and give due credit to the

workers under them translates into low worker morale.

What separates a leader from those who lay low? Knowledge and action – the ability to get up in the front lines, the ability to provide leadership and lead by example. She/he is a person of action, and from action proceeds progress.

Leadership means taking risks; learning from mistakes, and building on successful choices. The world's most successful companies and organizations are rife with innovators and thoughtful risk takers; decision makers empowered with responsibility and unafraid of exercising those skills and encouraging others to do the same.

Action, coupled with sound reasoning, will inspire others to be motivated, producing inevitable positive results. Real leaders provide opportunities and will always recognize the efforts of those who work under them. ***Does your ship have a captain? •***

**Their inability,  
or worse,  
unwillingness to  
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due credit to the  
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them translates  
into low worker  
morale.**



# WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

E-mail your letters to  
[workersvoice@outlook.com](mailto:workersvoice@outlook.com)

## DIDN'T LIKE EDITORIAL

Dear Editor:

With regard to the editorial perspective in the last issue, Summer 2017, *The Sky is Not Falling*.

Your editorial might promote smiles and giggles but only for a select few sunshine listers.

If you want to fight negativity in NL than get to the heart of the problem. It is coming from a sky high cost of living and low wages as well as infrastructure that's falling apart.

This province has been robbed for years and years by corruption in government and the private sector. The common man is getting tired of the boot always across his throat holding him down.

Your editorial does nothing to relieve that, nothing to help the common man/woman struggling to put food on the table and the lights on.

I love my province, however, I hate how our resources and potential prosperity have been plundered over the years. Our future may be ok, but we will never achieve even a quarter of its potential while this continues and Muskrat falls is just the latest fiasco in a long list.

Allan Parsons  
Manuals, CBS

## STOP THE GOVERNMENT FROM SADDLING US WITH MORE DEBT

Dear Editor:

People living in Corner Brook and the surrounding region have needed new health-care facilities, including more beds in long-term care, for many years. It came as welcome news to everyone, including CUPE members and their families, when the province announced two new facilities would begin construction later this year.

However, the secrecy and lack of transparency around these two projects are very troubling. In a meeting with then Finance minister Cathy Bennett and Transportation and Works Minister Al Hawkins in March this year, our representatives were told the details of these projects would be made public, but only after the contracts are signed. That's a red flag!

What exactly are public-private partnerships? Instead of using its own borrowing power, a government looking to build public infrastructure uses private-sector money for the project. The private sector invests some (or all) of the required money in return for healthy financial returns and a

measure of control.

As explained by economist Toby Sanger, financing a project at the seven to nine percent return rate that private investors expect from infrastructure investments would dramatically increase the total cost of a project financed over 30 years. If the province directly borrowed the funds, they would get the current 30-year bond rate of 3.7 per cent. There's another red flag.

The Newfoundland and Labrador government has stated that the Corner Brook long-term care facility will cost \$120 million to \$140 million and the hospital will cost \$700 million to \$900 million. Assuming the province is borrowing money to finance these projects, P3 deals would cost almost twice as much to borrow as public procurement. Why on earth would we do that?

If the province uses a P3 to build the long-term care facility and borrows \$120 million at seven per cent (the public model) amortized over 30 years, we'll pay \$167 million in interest. However, if we use public procurement and borrow the same amount at 3.7 per cent over 30 years, we'll pay \$79 million in interest.

If the province uses a P3 to build the hospital and borrows \$700 million at seven per cent (the

... the  
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transparency  
around these  
two projects  
are very  
troubling.

*Letters continues next page*

public model) amortized over 30 years, we'll pay \$977 million in interest. However, if we use public procurement and borrow the same amount at 3.7 per cent over 30 years, we'll pay \$460 million in interest.

There is plenty of evidence to show that P3s are the wrong way to finance public infrastructure.

The additional beds and services in Corner Brook will create new jobs, but that will happen regardless of how the facilities are built, and assuming the two projects don't go over budget.

The additional costs could result in closing beds, laying off staff and reducing the quality of care. Look at the P3-built North Bay Regional Hospital in Ontario, which cost at least \$160 million

more than public procurement would have cost. Over 50 beds have been closed, and they're on the third round of layoffs, with over 100 jobs cut.

The P3 deals that the Ball government wants to use are a Trojan horse that will allow the quality of our public health care to be influenced by private interests and profit margins.

CUPE Newfoundland Labrador urges the Ball government to take the following action:

- Make public the full details of the Corner Brook value-for-money report and business case — before final decisions are made and any contracts are signed. In addition, the province should mandate:

- Public consultation.

- The involvement of a provincial auditor.

- Public-private partnership transparency and accountability legislation that demands a preliminary analysis — available to the public — outlining the risks, costs and benefits of using a P3.

We are going to pay for these projects one way or another. We might as well build our health-care facilities publicly. Let's own and control them ourselves, for the public interest, and not for private profits.

**Wayne Lucas, president  
CUPE NL**

# On LABOUR DAY

we  
celebrate  
Registered  
Nurses  
& all our  
Province's  
Workforce



**Registered  
Nurses'  
Union**

**Newfoundland & Labrador**

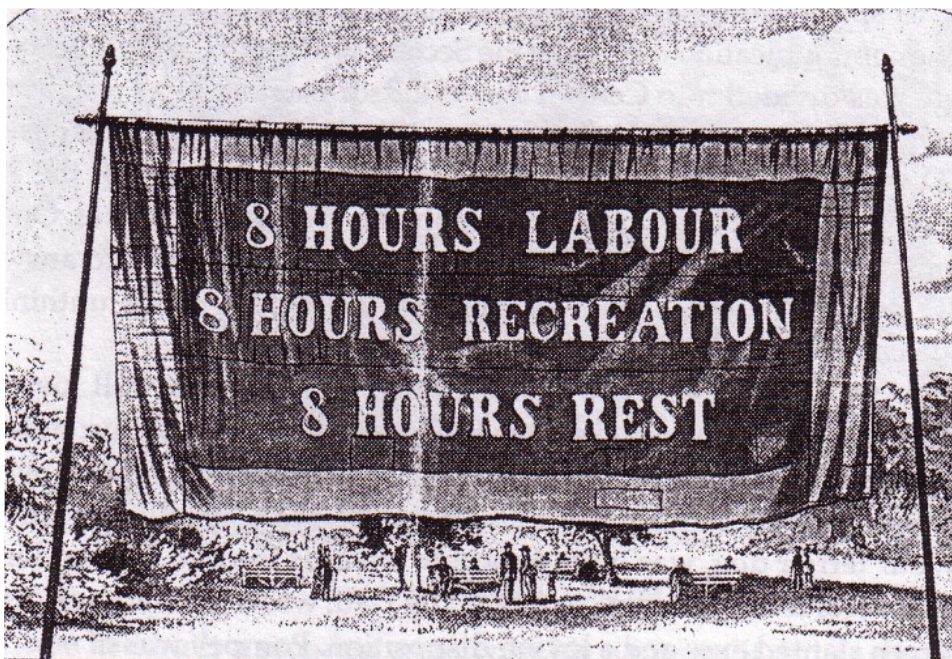
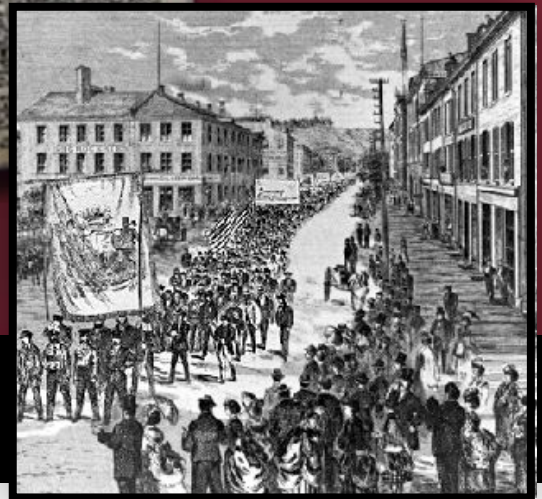
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## *Yesterday. Today & Future*

The parades held in support of the Nine Hour Movement and the printers' strike led to an annual celebration. ►



## **LABOUR DAY** Yesterday

*By Joan Evon*

Labour Day has its roots in an 1872 printers' strike in Toronto. Fighting for a nine-hour work day, the strikers' victory was a major milestone in the changing relations between Canadian workers and their government.

In a time when the news of labour "strife" is dominated by disputes between millionaire athletes and billionaire owners, history provides a useful perspective



on a period when working people had to fight to work less than 12 hours a day. The "Nine Hour Movement" began in Hamilton, Ontario, and then spread to Toronto, where its demands were taken up by the Toronto Typographical Union.

In 1869, the union sent a petition to its members' employers requesting a weekly reduction in hours per week to 58, placing itself among the leading advocates in the industrialized world for a shorter work week. Their request was refused outright by the owners of the printing shops, most vehemently by George Brown of *The Globe*.

By 1872, the union's stand had hardened from a request to a demand, a threat to strike. The employers called the demand for a shorter work week "foolish," "absurd," and "unreasonable." As a result, on 25 March 1872 the printers went on strike.

On 15 April, a demonstration was held to show solidarity among the workers of Toronto. A parade of some 2,000 workers marched through the city, headed by marching bands. By the time the parade reached Queen's Park, the sympathetic crowd had grown to 10,000.

The employers fought the

strikers by bringing in replacement workers from small towns. George Brown launched a counterattack by launching a legal action against the union for "conspiracy." Brown's action revealed the astonishing fact that according to the laws of Canada, union activity was indeed considered a criminal offense. Under the law, which dated back to 1792, police arrested and jailed the 24 members of the strike committee.

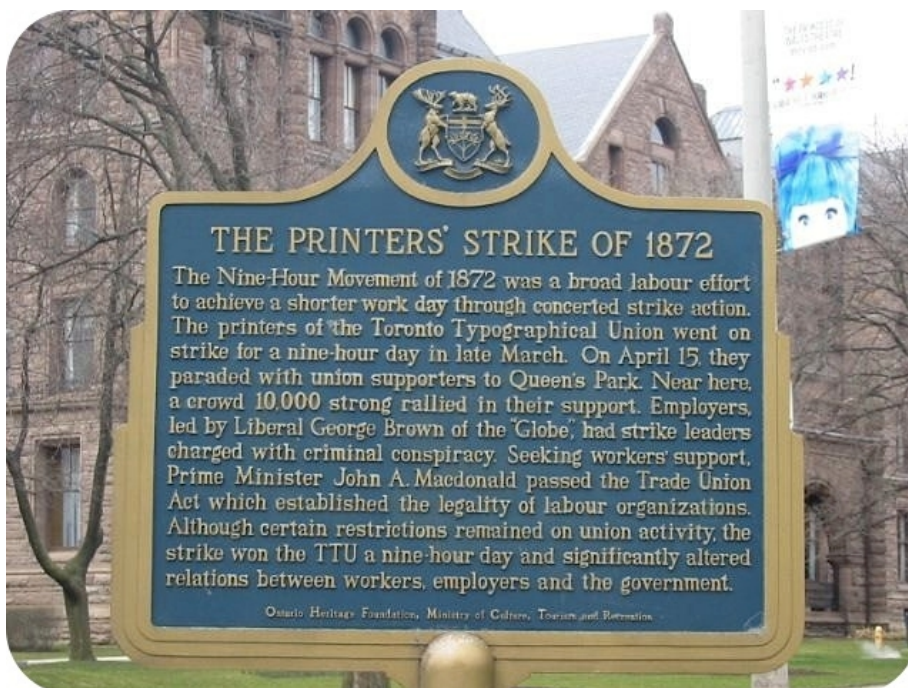
Brown, however, overplayed his hand. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had been watching the Nine Hour Movement "with curious interest, his big nose sensitively keen," wrote historian Donald Creighton, "like an animal's for any scent of profit or danger." The scent of profit came from the fact that Macdonald's old Liberal rival George Brown had made himself a hated man among the workers of Canada.

Macdonald was quick to capitalize. In Ottawa, he spoke to a crowd at city hall, promising to wipe the "barbarous laws" restricting labour from the books. Macdonald then came to the rescue of the imprisoned men and on 14 June passed the Trade Unions Act, which legalized and protected union activity. Macdonald's move not only

embarrassed his rival Brown but also earned him the enduring support of the working class.

After 1872, almost all union demands included the nine-hour day and the 54-hour week. Thus the Toronto printers were pioneers of the shorter work week in North America. Meanwhile, campaigns for an eight-hour day were already gaining in popularity, and would eventually take hold, in the United States.

The fight of the Toronto printers had a second, lasting legacy. The parades held in support of the Nine Hour Movement and the printers' strike led to an annual celebration. In 1882, American labour leader Peter J. McGuire witnessed one of these labour festivals in Toronto. Inspired, he returned to New York and organized the first American "labour day" on 5 September of the same year. Throughout the 1880s, pressure built in Canada to declare a national labour holiday and on 23 July 1894, the government of Prime Minister John Thompson passed a law making Labour Day official. A huge Labour Day parade took place in Winnipeg that year. It stretched some five kilometres. The tradition of a Labour Day celebration



**New York City eight-hour demonstration in September 1871.**  
From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 9/30/1871 (source) ▼





quickly spread across Canada and the continent. It had all begun in Toronto with the brave stand of the printers' union.

## LABOUR DAY TODAY

Today, the workers rights and union movement face a host of challenges. Many of these are old battles still being fought and re-fought: for fair wages, for decent health and safety protection, and for

job security.

High unemployment, especially amongst young people brings a host of problems. Workers are made to feel that they have little choice but to accept sub-par wages and working conditions, lest they lose their job to the un-employed.

The unemployed are likewise willing to accept such conditions as the simple price of getting a job.

Today, unions continue to

serve the same purpose for which they were originally founded. CEO and executive compensation is skyrocketing, while the middle class suffers from layoffs, unemployment and stagnant wages.

Unions and those involved in fighting for workers rights want increasing wages, raising the standard of living for the working class, ensuring safe working conditions, increasing benefits for both workers and their families.

Someone has to lead the fight and it is unions who fight for all workers who need fair treatment today as much as ever.

Employers are trying to shed responsibility for providing good pensions, reasonable work hours and job safety protections. Additionally, companies are making workers' jobs and incomes less secure through downsizing, part-timing, contracting out, and sending jobs off-shore.

As the nature of work changes, working people need the collective voice and bargaining



**Recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments and contributions of Health Care Professionals and all workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Together, you help make life better for everyone in our province. May you all have a safe and enjoyable Labour Day with your family and friends.**

power unions provide to keep employers from making the workplace look as it did in the early nineteenth century.

Working conditions at the turn of the 20th century, without worker representation, involved sweatshop conditions, child labour, unlivable wages, seventy plus hour work weeks.

Today, labour unions must continue to play an important role in ensuring justice for all workers.

## THE FUTURE

The success of raising the minimum wage to \$15.00, initiated by unions is a good example of reasons for optimism. \$15.00 is now considered the minimum standard for workers and is being put in place in several provinces with more to follow.

Unions are responsible for this campaign, along with all the other benefits workers enjoy, be they union or non-union workers. Many non-union workers do not realize this.

The future of unions can be assured but the weak link is marketing. Unions have not been good salespeople like Wal-Mart, Apple or Microsoft is, they will have to become as good or better to survive.

Unions have accomplished so much, for so many, including non-union workers. Yet many workers do not understand or appreciate this fact. This tells us something, it shows that unions need to do more than send out press releases or have a website.

Everything a private company does is heralded to all, every advancement, every product development, every award. People are sold that Wal-Mart is a great place to shop, they are convinced and Wal-Mart and its shareholders prosper. This marketing many times is a lie but they have no trouble selling those lies.

Why can't unions sell the truth, sell the facts? We need to see more promotions from unions on all levels. They need to market what they have done, what they do, who they are for.

With creative marketing campaigns and massively increased marketing budgets, unions can survive, without it they will fade away as workers slowly forget the truth. ■



## Newfoundland & Labrador Labour Day Events 2017

### ST. JOHN'S - Family Fun Day BBQ

St. John's and District Labour Council,  
Swilers Rugby Club, 100 Crosbie Road, St. John's

**Monday, September 4, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

For info: Travis Kendall Email: [SJDLC709NL@gmail.com](mailto:SJDLC709NL@gmail.com)

### GRAND FALLS - Town Parade

Central NL & District Labour Council,  
Main Street, Grand Falls / Windsor

**Monday, September 4, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm**

For info: Kathy Oake

Email: [labourcouncilcentral@gmail.com](mailto:labourcouncilcentral@gmail.com)

### CORNER BOOK - Family Fun Day BBQ

Corner Brook & District Labour Council,  
Margaret Bowater Park, O'Connell Drive, Corner Brook

**Monday, September 4, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

For info: Dan Quilty

Email: [cbdistrictlabourcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:cbdistrictlabourcouncil@gmail.com)

### LABRADOR CITY - Motorcade/Family Fun Day

Labrador West & District Labour Council,  
USW Hall, 105 Hudson Drive, Labrador City

**Monday, September 4, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

For info: Claude Grey Email: [labradorwestdlc@gmail.com](mailto:labradorwestdlc@gmail.com)



# TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY



*Cerebral palsy affected the whole left side of Paul's body.  
But he went on to become his high school class valedictorian.*

Most of us can remember a teacher who inspired, encouraged, or transformed us.

But how many of us have actually said thank you?

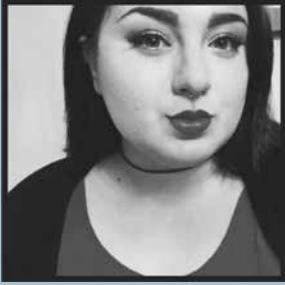
Great teachers have an influence that extends beyond the classroom, and takes root in our communities. So we offered people across Newfoundland and Labrador the chance to thank a teacher that changed their life – and they responded! Visit our online gallery, filled with stories, to discover the difference a teacher can make.



See the stories at [teacherschangelives.ca](http://teacherschangelives.ca)

Newfoundland & Labrador  
Teachers' Association

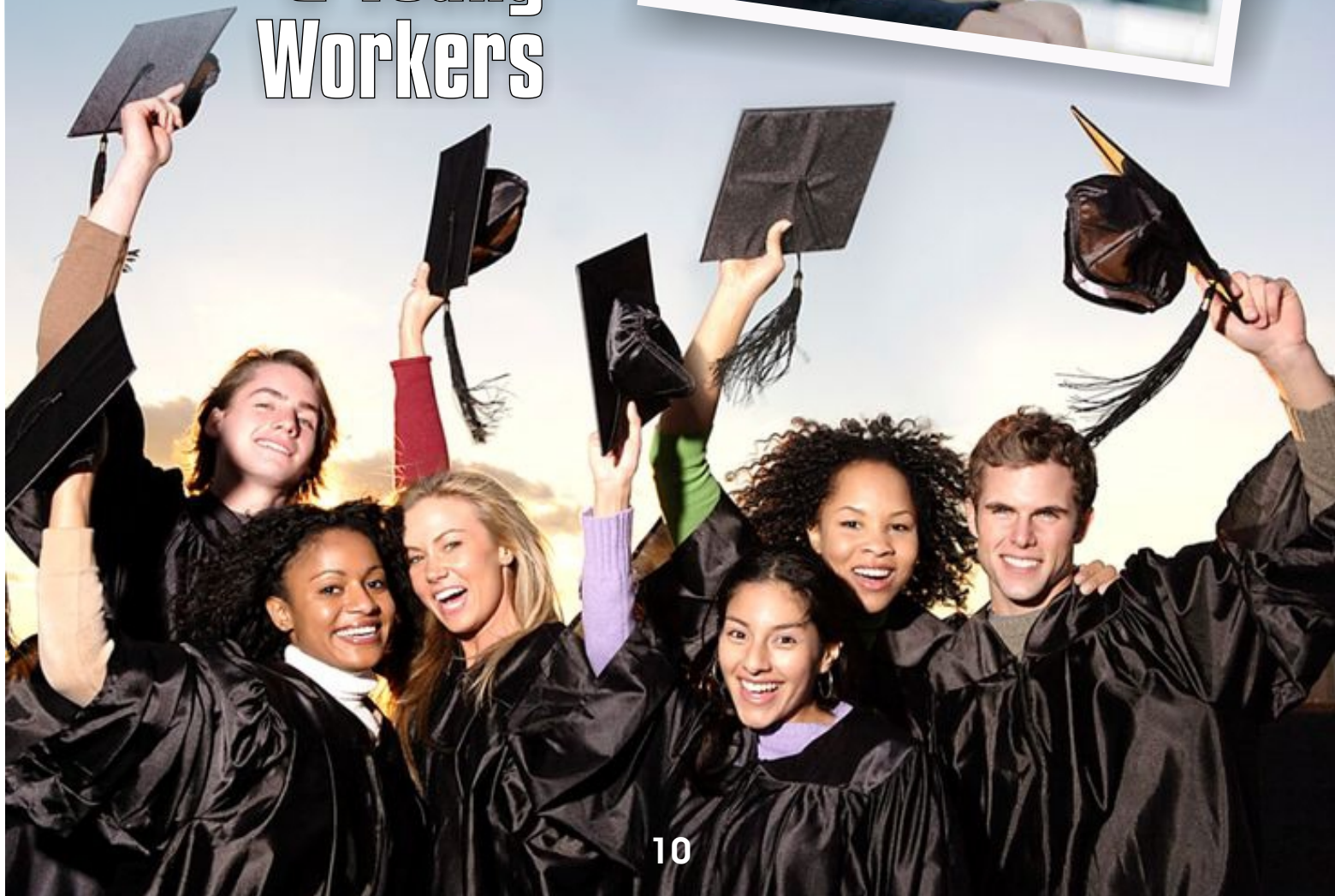
The Young Workers' Voice  
is organized by  
Erica Yetman,  
a journalism student.



PART 1

# LABOUR DAY & Young Workers

With so many young people struggling to break into the working world, Labour Day is something that needs to be acknowledged; a day to recognize the importance of all workers, but it is hard to celebrate being a worker if you can't get any work.





By Erica Yetman

It falls on the first Monday in September. Most people can be found hitting the road for the long weekend, packing bags and tents and coolers for one last excursion before Summer ends. The big “hoorah” for most young adults before settling in for another semester hitting the books. The unofficial “goodbye to Summer” weekend that people look forward to the entire month of August.

People know it as labour day weekend, and people know that it's a national holiday, but I find myself wondering... how many people know why?

Labour day is a holiday to celebrate workers. Most of us, at some point in our lives, will be nuts and bolts in the wheels of our society. Labour day is for us. It's a day for workers to lay back and rest up for the cold months to come. A day for our hard work and dedication to be celebrated, a day to thank our unions for standing up for us when we

needed it most.

For young adults, many of us have only held meagre part time jobs thus far in our short lives, but they are to be celebrated nonetheless. We are the next generation of professionals, poised to take over as the older population ages towards retirement, the part time jobs we hold now are stepping stones to positions we will accept in our futures.

Now is the time for us to celebrate labour day.

“We are on the cusp of joining the professional world, our time spent in school only helps to prepare us more for what life will be like into adulthood, we are the future.

Labour day is a day for us to celebrate ourselves, our lives, our accomplishments, the things we have yet to accomplish but aspire to, our work ethic and determination, the drive the older generation sometimes does not see in us but we know is there.

It's important that we realize our importance.

Many young adults know labour Day as an excuse to getaway with friends, one last wild weekend before responsibilities kick back in, one last chance to break away from it all. It is so much more than that.

When asked what Labour day means to them, most young adults gave varying versions of the same answer.

“The holiday at the end of the Summer?” said one interviewee, rather unsure himself.

“Time to get the by's together and go camping!” another said, with a chuckle.

According to Stats Canada young people aged 15-29 make up a whopping 19.4% of the population, with an unemployment rate of young adults almost as high at 14%. Young Canadians are finding themselves unemployed and overeducated, unable to move



out of their parents home til past the age of 30. This is an epidemic in Canada.

Young adults are forced to take jobs well below their abilities after years of post secondary either because there is nothing available in their fields, they don't have enough experience or someone with seniority claimed it first.

We work hard through years and years of college or university, rack up thousands of dollars in student loan debt only to graduate and be forced to accept a position at McDonalds

well below our pay grade.

Young adults face a tough future of clawing our way up the food chain to try to obtain for ourselves a portion of what our parents were able to achieve without any formal schooling or even a grade twelve diploma, in a lot of cases.

Sam Green is a 23-year

**Young adults face a tough future of clawing our way up the food chain.**



old-woman after completing a nine-month welding program, Green searched for months to find an entry level position within her field... to no avail.

"I grew up in a house with a single mom and two brothers. We all went to high school, graduated and went on to college. Money wasn't always around but we made it work." said Green. "My mother worked 3 jobs at a time to make sure that the bills were paid, that we had a roof over our head and that we never did without anything--including brand name clothing."

Growing up watching her mom work so hard to keep her family thriving, Green wanted to ensure her financial future.

"All my life I've been told that trade programs were the thing to do because it's in such high demand and pays so great." said Green. "Doing a 9 month program and coming out of school to be able to make good money seemed pretty sweet to kid just outta high school."

But it turns out, it wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

"I spent two years on the waiting list to even get into the welding program." Green shared.

"Once completing the program I received my first aid, my welding diploma, a CWB ticket - *a ticket that shows you've passed a test and you're*

**Young Canadians are finding themselves unemployed and overeducated, unable to move out of their parent's home 'til past the age of 30.**



*certified to weld in a certain position - and WHMIS."*

"After passing out and emailing hundreds of resumes, I only ever got one interview for welding," said Green. "The company was only looking for someone that was subsidized and unfortunately I was not because I haven't had a job or any hours worked in my trade."

Green's story is one that echoes that of many other young adults who work hard throughout

**"The company was only looking for someone that was subsidized . . ."**

school to gain the knowledge and instruction to begin their careers and work their way up the "ladder".

But they never get past the first rung, unable to even obtain jobs due to lack of experience and a flooded market.

"There was 15 people in my class if I recall exactly and only two have jobs in the welding field. It's been a couple years since I've graduated... WHMIS, first aid, CWB ticket has all expired," said Green.

It's not just trades people finding themselves unable to get

jobs after school.

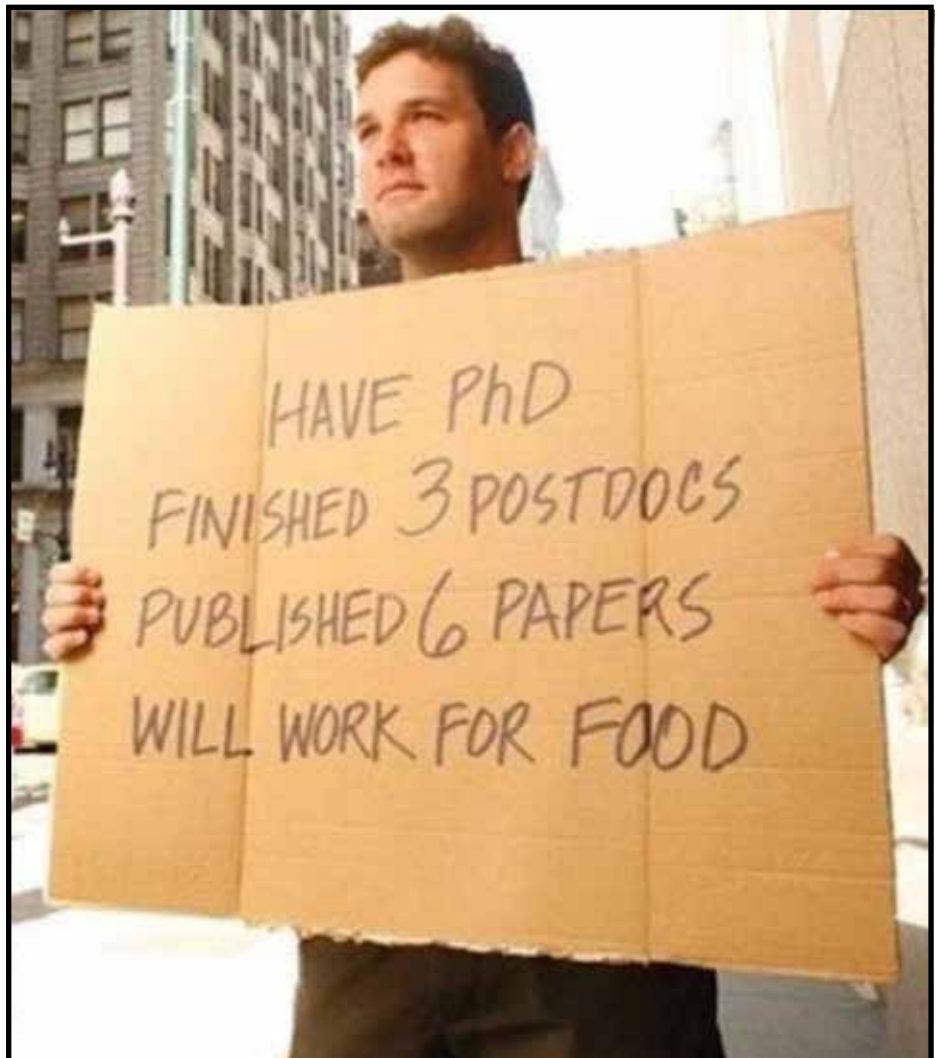
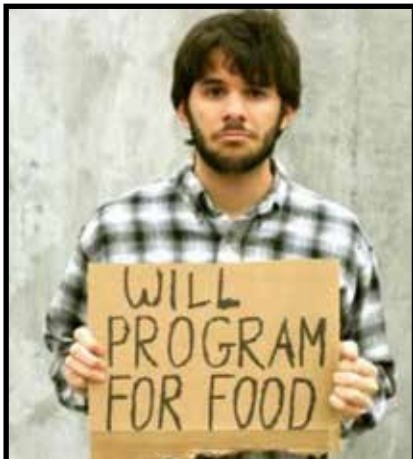
Chelsea Taylor is a 22 year old after completing a two year business administration program specializing in accounting, Taylor expected to be able to snag a job right out of school.

"Every business needs an accountant, this is something you need to have, so I didn't think it was going to be so difficult to get a job considering it's something I figured was in high demand," said Taylor. "But apparently not."

Currently, Taylor is working, but not in accounting. She says the position she's in currently has nothing to do with what she did in school.



**I don't have a job because I don't have experience; I don't have experience because I don't have a job...**



After graduating in June of 2016, Taylor said she spent three months applying to jobs and filled out as many as 60 applications before accepting her current position.

"Everywhere wants experience," said Taylor. "And you can't really get experience if no one will hire you."

Trying to budget rent, car payments, insurance and the basic necessities on not much more than minimum wage, Taylor says, is almost impossible.

"Having a life is pretty much little to none," said Taylor. "My little bit of social life that I have pretty much comes from my boyfriend being able to support me."

Though she is grateful for

the extra help, it's not an ideal situation and certainly not one she could have seen coming at the start of her program.

"It's stressful, I like to be able to look after myself."

Taylor is now readying



herself to go back to post-secondary to obtain her degree in hope of finding a position once finished.

With so many young people struggling to break into the working world, Labour Day is something that needs to be acknowledged, a day to recognize the importance of all workers, but it is hard to celebrate being a worker if you can't get any work.

"It's beyond disappointing when you go to school for something you have an interest in, you spend the money to get yourself through and you have big dreams when you get out, just to be working at Walmart," said Green. ■

**"It's beyond disappointing when you go to school for something you have an interest in, you spend the money to get yourself through and you have big dreams when you get out, just to be working at Walmart."**





The **Young**  
Workers'  
Voice

# Education

**FREE**

New Workers' Voice magazine approached students from all over Canada to ask them about the impact free tuition would have on their lives.

**Here's what they had to say...**

# Q&A

## PART 2

Interviews By: Erica Yetman

**THE QUESTION:** New Workers' Voice is calling on the federal and all provincial governments to initiate a process whereby **FREE** post-secondary education would be available to all. What impact would this have on your life today and into your career future?



**SAMANTHA MERCER****Age:** 26**Hometown:** St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia

When I graduated from high school, a group of friends and myself decided we wanted to go to Memorial University. Now that I have graduated with a B.A. and a B.Ed and am now working on my M.Ed, free post secondary education would have a huge impact. I started with \$40,000 in student loans with a massive interest rate. Education is supposed to be the answer to a lot of troubles. How to move forward in life and better your own situation and the future generations of your family. I can see why, in a lot of cases, generations of families cannot leave the cycle of poverty. A \$40,000 student

loan, with very high interest, to enter a profession where the salaries are not rising with the cost of living.

If post secondary education was free people would be in the position to better themselves and their families. As it stands right now, it is a privilege only very few can afford.

**ABIGAIL HUDSON****Age:** 23**Hometown:** Saint John, NB.

if I had free post secondary it would have been much less stress throughout school and more time to focus on studying. It would mean less pressure to do overtime shifts to pay off my line of credit, to pay interest on





and save my current money for future investments like a home, car, etc. I am currently living at home to try and save money and free education would allow me to be out on my own and overall be much happier and independent.

### John Buckley

**Age:** 19.

**Hometown:** Quispamsis, New Brunswick.

My tuition was very expensive for my family so free would be awesome. It would help me get on my feet faster. As paying off debt would not be there.

### Ellen Mersha

**Age:** 23

**Hometown:** Toronto, ON

Free post secondary would put my bank account balance approximately \$14K higher than it is right now, as I have had to pay out of my own pocket for approximately 2 years. It would help my overall credit score improve, as I would be able to begin paying back the loans I've taken out, thus bettering my credit score for future significant

purchases, such as a home or a car.

### Rebecca Nolan

**Age:** 22

**Where you're from:** California

I am extremely lucky in that I have parents who saved up enough money for me to have a bit of a college fund. But if I stayed in the US it wouldn't get me through my first two years of my undergrad. I needed to find a way to make the money that I had last as long as it could. There were times in high school and University where we thought we may lose our house. And I begged my mom to use my college money to help with it. She wouldn't. And so I felt like the least that I could do was make sure that the money would go as far as it could.

That's why I chose Canada, because I crunched the numbers and it would get me through my masters if I budgeted right and worked while I was at school. I guess that this is a long way of saying that it would have meant a lot to me, if

I hadn't had to make that choice just based on money.

Sometimes I wonder if my life would have been different or better if the price tag hadn't have played such a huge role in my decision. If I had free post secondary university I would have been saved from a lot of stress.

### Katherine Benda

**Age:** 25

**Hometown:** North Delta, British Columbia

If I were able to have free education I would not be as stressed about graduating as I am right now. I am about to have to start paying off my debts having graduated with a second degree and still a low prospect of finding work. As I enter the world of work I realize that it may all be for nothing as the only work I can find at the moment is minimum wage.

### Catherine K

**Age:** 27

**Where you're from:** Originally



Windsor, Ontario

I wouldn't be nearly as stressed about my finances while studying, to study a topic I actually enjoy instead of what will make me money. I would be able to continually enhance my knowledge with the rapidly changing industry and be able to keep up to date on new expectations for my field of work.

## Katelyn C

**Age:** 23

**Living:** Thunder Bay

Free post secondary education would have a huge impact on my life. As someone who graduated from a program and entered the work field I'm now returning to school to expand on that education but access to loans and student aid are much more difficult to obtain then I'd expected. Moving away from home and paying for rent, utilities and all other costs associated is expensive enough but when you add tuition it would be almost impossible to cover without some type of loan.

## Blair Kerr

**Age:** 23 (Brock University)

**Hometown:** Smiths Falls, Ontario

I'll be one of the first people to confess that I can see why education is expensive, and I am even a proponent of students paying for education. I think people are encouraged to work harder and stay committed to their work when they have a financial investment in it. I realize that schools require funds to properly pay professors, administration, and teaching staff, as well as provide the necessary maintenance to buildings and technology for teaching.

I do however believe that

education should be affordable. I saved my own money while working in the summer, my parents put money into an RESP while I was growing up, and I was also fortunate enough to earn scholarships throughout my university career in both my BA and my MA because of my grades and extracurricular activities. My academic achievements and involvement in extracurricular activities would have been much more difficult though if I had to work a near full-time job just to survive, or deal with the stress of knowing I would have incredibly large loans to payoff upon graduation. Free or affordable tuition means that I have the ability to choose jobs that are in my field and provide valuable experience, especially early in my career, without having to focus entirely on the position's salary.

## Kass Baird

**Age:** 22

**Hometown :** Alberta

I have about 10K in debt, and have just started my family. It's a huge deal for us because trying to afford such a high cost of living on one salary AND making payments on student loans can make a budget pretty tight. When you need to make payments on such a massive debt and afford to be able to live and take care of your family, you take a job where you'll be making more to start because you can't afford not to.

## Holly M

**Age:** 21

**From:** Calgary

Free education would have given me the opportunity to have more of a social life and gain more volunteer experience while

still having lots of time to study, because I wouldn't have to work quite as much. However, I feel like I would not have developed the same time management skills and financial responsibility because working to pay for tuition and textbooks has taught me how to balance work, school, money, volunteering and still maintain a social life

## Shaina Adams-Suggashie

**Age:** 24

**From:** Red Lake, Ontario

I had to move 100km away from home and find a place to rent. I missed the deadline to apply for free education with the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council and had to apply for a student loan. I struggled with rent, buying groceries, and paying for gas. I didn't buy books my first semester because I didn't have enough to pay for rent. Now I am approved with NNEC and it is a huge stress relief, I have been able to focus on my studies and it's showed in my marks.

## Warren Crane

**Age:** 23

**From:** Upper Island Cove, NL

If there was a free education opportunity I believe it would've benefited my years in study and also the years after graduating where you're in the work force. Getting student loans to attend post secondary is stressful but it is even more cumbersome when you're in repayment while still trying to save. •





# Where is our next leader, our next Visionary?

Our society is sorely in need of another Tommy Douglas. Our country deserves a visionary who will make it his (or her) goal to provide government-funded post-secondary education for all, regardless of financial, social, ethnic or any other status.



It's time for  
**FREE**  
Post-Secondary  
Education  
in Canada

Tommy Douglas  
1961–1971



## PART 3

By Jean Moses

**T**ommy Douglas, long recognized as the father of Medicare (government-funded health insurance), was a visionary! A Baptist minister before moving into politics, Tommy Douglas believed government had a responsibility to improve the

lives of ordinary people.

It wasn't easy to translate his dreams into reality, but he never gave up. As he put it, "We should never, never be afraid or ashamed about dreams. The dreams won't all come true; we won't always make it; but where

there is no vision, a people perish. Where people have no dreams and no hopes and aspirations, life becomes dull and a meaningless wilderness."

More than 50 years later, our society is sorely in need of another Tommy Douglas. Our

country deserves a visionary who will make it his (or her) goal to provide government-funded post-secondary education for all, regardless of financial, social, ethnic or any other status.

That visionary leader won't have an easy job. Pushing for free education for everyone will be difficult, and frustrating, and even thankless at times. The road will undoubtedly be very bumpy. Objections will be loud and diverse – those who can afford it should pay; those self-centred teens don't appreciate anything they don't have to work for; students can always get a student loan; and so on. Other objections will argue against including immigrants, for fear that “they” might take jobs away from “us”.

That's the type of thinking used to try and derail medicare. An unspoken theme throughout was that people with money somehow deserved better medical care than those without. Translated to education, it's that people with money are somehow more intelligent and will contribute more to our growing country than lesser people will.

When that special leader does surface, we'll likely hear all sorts of seemingly-valid arguments to keep the status quo. People will argue there are scores of scholarships, bursaries and grants available to post-secondary students – but how many go unawarded through a lack of applicants, or applicants unable to meet the specific qualifications?

Many overworked school counselors simply can't keep up with the myriad of awards available to students, so can't tell students about them. Perhaps, although the student is very bright, final marks don't truly reflect intelligence or ability because he or she gets tense when taking exams.

**When that special leader  
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arguments to keep the  
status quo.**

When marks are a major deciding factor, only students with 95+% win those many awards.

What about the intelligent student who falls into the 80% range instead? Don't they deserve a chance? Financial need isn't even considered for some awards, and until recently, that award money was taxed. That meant that even when much-needed funds were advanced, the student wound up being able to use only a portion to pay school costs.

Wouldn't it be a better



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society if every student with the ability to go beyond high school could? It shouldn't matter which school or career they chose, tuition and books should be provided without cost. Some students will opt for university, becoming doctors, teachers, dentists, lawyers or engineers. Others will prefer an apprenticeship in much-needed trades. Still others will opt for the specialized training required for a career in technology or arts.

In a country as rich as Canada, no one with ability should be denied the opportunity for higher education. Unfortunately, though, that won't happen without someone willing to devote time, effort, and maybe even reputation to push for free post-secondary education. It will indeed take a unique person to make it her or his life mission.

To turn free education into reality, we need someone (not necessarily a standing politician) who is persistent enough, courageous enough and thick-skinned enough to question the status quo. That person, like Tommy

Douglas, will have to face adversity with humour, as well as vocal opposition from all sides, probably including both social and mainstream media.

Our visionary must want to make Canada a better place for all, paying special attention to the less fortunate in our country. That

**To turn free education into reality, we need someone (not necessarily a standing politician) who is persistent enough, courageous enough and thick-skinned enough to question the status quo.**

includes people whose children never consider an education beyond high school, knowing their parents can never afford it. Even when stubborn young adults are determined to sacrifice and make more of themselves in spite of the financial challenge of fighting for

that education, they are hampered after graduation by the mountain of debt accumulated through student loans.

Now, consider what our world might be like if that much-needed visionary, our modern-day Tommy Douglas, were to appear in our country, and even succeed. Our next generation wouldn't be dependent upon parents for a further education. Those students wouldn't have to work all summer, scrimping and saving so they have enough money to cover even a portion of the education costs involved. Young people wouldn't have to sacrifice study hours to a part-time job to get an education.

It shouldn't be the students' responsibility. It should be ours! Our government should bear a responsibility to provide the best (and longest) education that each student is capable of, and wants!

Tommy Douglas' words still apply all these many years later: "We are all in this world together, and the only test of our character that matters is how we look after the least fortunate among us. How



we look after each other, not how we look after ourselves. That's all that really matters."

We know that the visionaries, the leaders of this world, are rare. The majority of us, politicians and non-politicians alike, simply drift through life trying to do our best for ourselves and our families. It makes us uncomfortable to consider those without advantages that we've worked hard to provide for those we love. We don't want to think about those first-generation Canadians who've sacrificed much to begin a new life here – those whose children have the potential to contribute to Canada but are unable to because the family hasn't been here long enough. We tend to downplay the ability of those students from smaller centres who haven't had the options of large, urban schools.

But what if our badly-needed leader were to step

forward? What if he or she was courageous enough to go against accepted thinking and push for free education for everyone? How might that affect our society after a generation?

**But what if our badly-needed leader were to step forward? What if he or she was courageous enough to go against accepted thinking and push for free education for everyone? How might that affect our society after a generation?**

Perhaps the child down the street who's so painfully shy that they seldom speak in class will become a Nobel prize winner. Perhaps the child of those people

you tend to avoid because of their poverty will return to your community to contribute as a caring doctor or dentist.

When no doors are closed, when the future is open-ended, children will be able to dream of becoming whatever they wish. With an entire generation dreaming, there is no limit to the benefits society and our great country will reap. We need that leader, that visionary, willing to swim upstream against public opinion, and articulate enough to convince others to believe in the dream! With government-funded education for everyone, regardless of station or family resources, Canada and our world will become a better place for all. ■

***"Courage, my friends; 'tis not too late to build a better world."* Tommy Douglas**



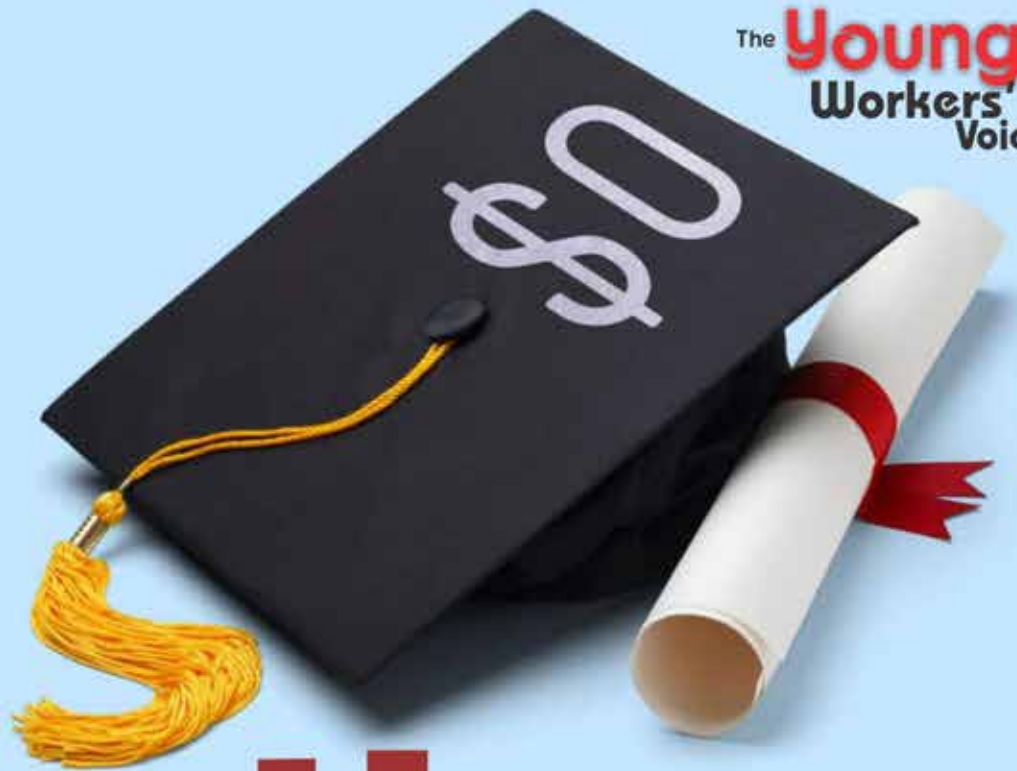
***"Children of today are the leaders of tomorrow and education is a very important weapon to prepare children for their future roles as leaders of the community"***

*Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela*



## PART 4

The  
Extreme  
Centre  
Cannot  
Hold



# It's time to embrace **free** education!

Tuition fees are essentially a flat tax on learning, levied equally on students irrespective of their financial status. Free education on the other hand, would mean a transfer of wealth from the top down.



By Peyton Veitch

neoliberalism. Social democratic governments wedded themselves to deregulation, privatization of state assets, and cuts to public expenditure. As politics became less about a clash of different visions for what constitutes the

**P**olitics is broken. Across the industrialized west, parties of the left and right have converged in mutual defence of

good life, and more about narrow managerialism, cynicism increased and electoral participation correspondingly declined.

The iconoclastic author Tariq Ali refers to this convergence as the "extreme centre". Emerging in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has reigned unchallenged for almost three decades but is finally showing signs of breaking down.

One of the most striking

examples of this convergence revolves around tuition fees. Following the Second World War, free or nominal tuition was an indispensable element of newly established welfare states in Europe and North America. This was the case in Canada, as high levels of public funding allowed working class students to access post-secondary institutions at minimal cost for the first time.

By the 1990s, this model began to fall apart, and it was often social democrats who wielded the axe. Free education in Britain survived Margaret Thatcher, but its death blow was delivered by Tony Blair in 1997, when his Labour government introduced tuition fees. The acceptance of tuition fees by social democratic parties, including by provincial NDP governments, is part of a broader retreat from universality in favour of means tested programs, and has given a

progressive veneer to arguments against a universal model of post-secondary education.

In Canada, providing post-secondary institutions with greater "flexibility" to raise tuition fees has been an unfortunate hallmark of nominally social democratic governments. Led by Bob Rae,

**Cracks are starting to appear in the seemingly impenetrable extreme centre, as a return to the politics of solidarity starts to demonstrate impressive electoral results.**



Ontario's first NDP government increased tuition fees every year they were in office during the early 1990s, allowing them to more than double.

Despite assurances to the contrary, Manitoba's NDP government lifted a tuition fee freeze in 2008, eventually restricting increases for domestic undergraduate students to the rate of inflation.

In 2011, Nova Scotia's first NDP government did likewise, allowing tuition fees to rise by 3% per year. In all three of these cases, a common narrative was put forward: reducing tuition fees is a subsidy to the rich and funding should be targeted towards financial assistance for low-income students.

Darrell Dexter, Nova Scotia's former NDP Premier summed up this view, stating in 2012 that he rejected lower tuition fees because "It





disproportionately benefits people who have more means, who come from higher income levels..."

This encapsulates the retreat from universality by social democratic parties in government. The same argument advanced by Dexter against tuition fee reductions could be made against universal healthcare, insofar as even billionaires receive care free at the point of use under our system. Yet far from being a sop to the rich, universal programs are redistributive in nature.

What detractors overlook when they assert that free education subsidizes the wealthy is how its funding is predicated upon a progressive tax system where those who have more to contribute pay more. Tuition fees are essentially a flat tax on

learning, levied equally on students irrespective of their financial status. Free education on the other hand, would mean a transfer of wealth from the top down.

Paradoxically, countries that have maintained universality as the guiding principle of their respective welfare states, including Norway and Sweden, boast dramatically lower rates of inequality than those emphasizing means testing. Not only is this a product of higher marginal tax

**These encouraging numbers echo support for free education that the Canadian Federation of Students uncovered during its round of annual polling this year.**

rates on top earners, it also illustrates something about the nature of universal programs. Since the number of people they benefit is much greater than targeted assistance to the poor, a large and powerful constituency is created. This means that if politicians have the temerity to slash funding or raise user fees, they risk provoking the wrath of a broad cross section of society.

Means testing divides people up in to categories, between recipients who are stigmatized, and non-recipients who resent their tax dollars only benefiting those poorer than them. Universal programs, including free education, build coalitions across classes and engender solidarity.

Cracks are starting to appear in the seemingly impenetrable extreme centre, as



a return to the politics of solidarity starts to demonstrate impressive electoral results. In 2016 Bernie Sanders galvanized millions of Americans and nearly won the Democratic presidential nomination by campaigning on universal healthcare and free education.

Most recently and encouragingly, the Labour Party in Britain came within an inch of power by recommitting itself to a dramatic expansion of the welfare state.

Led by Jeremy Corbyn, Labour put forward a platform that included elimination of tuition fees as a key pillar of this expansion. In a remarkable turnaround for a party that introduced tuition fees while in government during the 1990s, Labour campaigned on free education and promised to implement it during their first year in office.

The embrace of this policy helped fuel a significant increase in youth voter turnout, to the Labour Party's immense benefit. More than half of youth aged 18-24 voted, a 16% increase over the 2015 election. Fully 60% of this cohort cast their ballots for Labour.

Labour's platform contained a number of proposals including scrapping precarious zero hours contracts, introducing rent controls and a national living wage which all appealed to a generation facing the very real prospect of enduring lower living standards than their parents. The one policy that appeared to have the greatest impact of all

**By returning to a kind of politics that seeks to transform the system rather than simply running it more efficiently, they can cease being obstacles in the way of free education and start being allies in the struggle for it.**

was a pledge to eliminate tuition fees.

According to polling done by YouGov, scrapping tuition was the most memorable policy in Labour platform. It also enjoyed wide popularity. Not only among 18-24 year olds, 58% of whom supported it, but also among the general population where 49%

said it was a good idea, 36% were opposed, and 15% didn't know.

These encouraging numbers echo support for free education that the Canadian Federation of Students uncovered during its round of annual polling this year. Working with Nanos, we surveyed Canadians on their views regarding post-secondary education. To our astonishment, 71% of respondents agreed with raising taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians to fund the elimination of university and college tuition fees.

Despite years of being lectured to by pundits and politicians about the need for government to "live within its means", Canadians are open to a large-scale expansion of the welfare state financed by progressive tax increases.

The Overton Window, a term coined by a political scientist of the same name to describe a range of ideas deemed common sense, reasonable and realistic, is shifting rapidly. Five years ago, few would have imagined the rapid progress made by the Fight for \$15 movement, with a

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number of states and provinces, the latter including Alberta and Ontario, committed to the implementation of \$15 an hour minimum wages. Likewise, the idea that millions of people would vote for candidates in the United States and Britain supporting free tuition, or indeed that NDP leadership aspirants would make it a core part of their platform, would have seemed equally farfetched.

Why has this happened? Years of stagnant or falling wages, deteriorating public services, and soaring consumer debt levels has left people weary with the status quo and increasingly open to radical alternatives.

Wage growth in Canada is

barely keeping pace with inflation. At the same time, we have earned the dubious distinction of becoming the most leveraged nation in the G7, with household debt sitting at 171% of income. A significant portion of this debt, to the tune of \$28 billion, is made up of public student loans. The powder keg represented by this debt bubble can hardly be overstated. If interest rates rise by a mere 0.25%, over 700,000 Canadians will be pushed in to a negative cash flow situation. Meanwhile, life at the top has never been more lucrative for Canada's economic elite.

This year, Oxfam reported that two billionaire families, the

Thompsons and the Westons, own as much wealth as the bottom-earning 11 million Canadians. As well, the country's top earning CEOs now earn 193 times the average worker's wage.

It's this grotesque disparity, and people's awareness of it, which provides fertile ground for a populist alternative with free tuition at its centre. Free education would provide significant relief to households drowning in debt.

Closing tax loopholes, taxing capital gains at the same rate as income and raising corporate tax rates from their current depths (the lowest effective rates in the G7) would generate more than enough



revenue to cover the \$10.2 billion in tuition fees paid by students in Canada, while simultaneously reducing inequality.

This is not the kind of populism that scorns immigrants, religious minorities and racialized communities while protecting the interests of a rarefied ruling class. It's a populism of the left: one which addresses the real causes of people's insecurity while redistributing wealth and power

from those who have amassed it in obscene quantities. In a word, it's called socialism.

We can't rely on a political party to advance the cause of free education. Wherever that fight is being won, whether in Germany or Chile, it is the result of sustained organizing efforts involving thousands of students and workers. We must however push our politicians on the centre-left to abandon the

extreme centre for good. By returning to a kind of politics that seeks to transform the system rather than simply running it more efficiently, they can cease being obstacles in the way of free education and start being allies in the struggle for it. •

Peyton Veitch is National Treasurer  
Canadian Federation of Students



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# Dean Ingram

**Dean Ingram commenced his two-year term as President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) in August. However, the former educator/administrator is very familiar with the association's goals, objectives, victories and challenges having served in various capacities with the union during his career.**

*By Danette Dooley*

Originally from Arnold's Cove, NL, Ingram's career (both in the classroom and as an administrator/principal) spans over 25 years and took him to schools in Twillingate, Pilley's Island, Swift Current, Bonavista and Port Rexton.

He is a former president of the association's Trinity and Clarendville branches and was elected to the NLTA Provincial Executive in 2003.

Since that time, Ingram has chaired various committees at the provincial level, including the association's Negotiating Team.

Ingram served as NLTA Vice-President from 2013-2017 – before moving into the President's position.

He is currently on leave from his position as a biology/science teacher with the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI).

Ingram said while he's been serving on the NLTA provincial executive for the past 14 years, as president, there are always new things to learn. The association has an excellent staff, he said, and the outgoing president, James Dinn, has been great in that position.

"Jim has set a bar for me



to try and reach and a bar to ensure that we stay on a very similar path to the one we've been on, for the past four years, under Jim's leadership."

When asked about the status of the association's collective bargaining with the provincial, Ingram answered cautiously, keeping his cards close to his chest. It's obviously important to him to bargain at the table rather than in the media.

"Government has received our opening positions and we have received theirs. As per our practice and policy, once those packages are received, the full membership is engaged and made aware of exactly what the contents are of both sets of proposals. Now, we are waiting for dates to meet again in the fall," he said.

Teachers recognize that the province is facing fiscal challenges, Ingram said, but, at the same time, he said, the desire is to find a deal that is fair to the association's membership and brings education where it needs to be.

There are ways to do that, he said, which would allow the province to meet its fiscal requirements.

**"We all have had teachers that, at some point in our lives, have made a difference... during that school day, that teacher is acting as the parent. So there's a very powerful message there. The campaign has certainly taken off. They are real stories that allow people to acknowledge the fact that teachers do make a difference in students' lives."**

In looking at the positive initiatives that the association has embarked upon to help the public realize the impact teachers have on students – not only in the classroom but throughout their lives – Ingram talks about the "Teachers Change Lives Every Day Public Awareness Campaign."

"We all have had teachers that, at some point in our lives, have made a difference... during that school day, that teacher is acting as the parent. So there's a very powerful message there. The campaign has certainly taken off. They are real stories that allow people to acknowledge the fact that teachers do make a difference in students' lives," he said.

When asked if he had a teacher/mentor when he was a student, Ingram answers with a resounding "absolutely."

There were several he said but one in particular – a teacher who recently retired. Ingram was in high school at the time.

"Diane (Drover) Neil – she was my biology teacher. She meant a lot to me. She was a young teacher at the time in Arnold's Cove. I wasn't necessarily the ideal student. Far from it. But I will always remember her calm demeanor and approach, her dedication, her willingness to get involved with students... to go above and beyond for me – even though there were times undoubtedly when I tried her patience."

In telling his story for the Teachers Change Lives initiative ([www.teacherschangelives.ca](http://www.teacherschangelives.ca)), Ingram said Neil bought a level of patience and competence to teaching that were far beyond

**TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY**



## Thank you, Mr. Strickland

Author: Kristin Piercey

Teacher's name: Mr. Keith Strickland

Teacher's school: Fitzgerald Academy

*I'd like to thank Mr. Strickland for all of his wonderful help and support while going through High School, especially in my Senior Year. You have not only taught me in school, but you have inspired me to always work harder and to always follow my dreams.*

*Every time I would go into his classroom, he would tell me and my classmates a life story of his that always taught us a life lesson. One of those lessons that he taught both me and other students was, "Those who have never made a mistake, have never tried anything new".*

*Those lessons that he taught me, I will always continue to carry them wherever I go in life. Thank you so much for everything. I'll never forget you.*

## TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY



### Thank you, Ms. Taylor

Author: Liam Dawson

Teacher's name: Sharon Taylor

Teacher's school: Ascension Collegiate

*Ms. Sharon Taylor is one of the most outstanding teachers I know. It is remarkable how no matter what, she is there for the students of the Ascension Collegiate.*

*Most every day she works very hard through her preps to better students in their learning and education. I know this from experience, for example, if I am out writing a test or doing a practice essay in English class, she is so patient and determined to make me do my best. Another example, in the past week she has been giving up her lunch time to prepare students for the public speaking speak off. Furthermore, Ms. Taylor strives for equality for students that have learning disabilities; for that matter every student she will pick up for you no matter what the circumstance.*

*There is such a happy glow about her when you pass her in the hallways. Everyone can tell she loves what she does. Her funny, loving personality brings warmth and joyfulness to the school community. You just gravitate towards her because you know you will be 10 times better than you already were after speaking to her.*

*Ms. Sharon Taylor, you are truly beautiful inside and out. Thank you.*

her years.

"She was a new teacher back in 1986 and I along with many of my classmates were certainly challenging on many levels. Yet despite the challenges we put forward, she certainly did a tremendous job in showing me what it meant to be a classroom teacher."

Ingram credits the teacher he knew as Mrs. Drover for his decision to pursue a career in education.

"I am a Biology Teacher and I only hope that I have become the teacher that Mrs. Drover was," he said.

As for the association's priorities moving forward, Ingram said, there will be a summer planning meeting in August at which time the new executive (including Ingram and the association's new Vice President, Trent Langdon) will meet to set priorities."

"The priorities will involve continuing to work to improve public education," Ingram said.

The best way to do so is to improve both teaching and learning conditions, he said.

"Promoting teaching as a profession and making sure that, to the best of our abilities, every teacher has the classroom environment to allow not just them to succeed but their students as well."

The classroom of today isn't the same as the classroom of decades ago, Ingram said.

While there are more demands placed on teachers, he said, the Association recognizes that every student has the right to a good education.

"But, you have students that have differential needs, those differential needs require

provision of resources and those resources aren't just simply text resources. They require human resources and different interventions," he said.

In terms of teacher workload, Ingram said, it's much more intensified than years ago.

There's more preparation work to be done, he said, and teachers are finding that the ability for them to provide for their students is being compromised. That's frustrating for teachers, he said.

"There is so much they want to do but there are so many demands, that it impacts on what they want to do."

While there are numerous examples of teacher workload increase, Ingram gives the implementation of full day Kindergarten as just one example.

The Association supports full day Kindergarten, he said, but with it comes more challenges for teachers.

"When full day Kindergarten was brought in, what it meant - from a logistical standpoint - is that you had an additional group of students that were staying through the lunch hour... this meant that not only do you have more students in

**"Government will argue that they can't afford (the allocation of more services for students with challenges). I think the argument can be made that, in many ways, they can't afford not to."**



your building to supervise but, the need for attention when your students are just four and five years old, is certainly more intensive than for older students."

The combined class initiative also brings with it many challenges, he said.

Ingram taught and was an administrator in a school that used the multi-age/multi-grade teaching model. It can work effectively, he said, when done correctly.

"But for students to be dropped in for one year and then taken out of that environment, that dictates that the ability for long-term planning is very compromised, if it can be done at all."

Speaking in general terms about teacher cuts, Ingram said, when teachers are removed from the system, it has "a download impact on what teachers can do and deliver."

"It means larger class sizes and research clearly shows that class size numbers do indeed affect delivery of instruction... and if there are more students in a room, the ability for that teacher to provide individualized attention to a teacher is significantly hampered. If you've got 20 students in a room, in a one-hour class period, each student gets an average of three

**"For that to be the norm, to have three students who needed to be isolated on the lunch hour, that speaks to the intensity of the problem... that's problematic."**

minutes of attention. If you've got 30 students in that room, that's cut to two minutes."

When it comes to frontline interventions for students with mental health challenges, Ingram said, those interventions come at the school level.

"If government is truly serious about working to improve student mental health one logical place to start would be to utilize the national standards (for guidance counsellors/psychologists) from government's own commission's report so many years ago," Ingram said noting that the province has yet to meet those standards.

Ingram said in a previous school where he worked there were a number of students who would have been helped by counsellor intervention. However, he said, the students did not get the help they needed.

He drew on the adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," to further along his point.

"Government will argue that they can't afford (the allocation of more services for students with challenges). I think the argument can be made that, in many ways, they can't afford not to."

Violence in the classroom is also something today's teachers are facing, Ingram said.

Teachers have been injured on the job because of such violence, he said.

"Some of this comes back to if there were enhanced supports, enhanced allocation of support services... you could assist those students... and it's not just high school students."

## TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY



### Thank you, Mr. Warren

Author: McKenzie McHugh

Teacher's name: Marc Warren

Teacher's school: Ascension Collegiate

*It was once said by Sir William A. Ward that, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."*

*Marc Warren has been one of my teachers since grade 7. He has not only been a teacher to me, but he has been a great friend and most certainly the best go to. He is one of the most inspiring men you will ever meet.*

*Mr. Warren does everything he can in his power to help out around school, around the community, and even on his own time he's trying to help. Whether it has to do with helping another student, staying up continuous hours in the night to write a play for his drama team, or even volunteering for events around the school.*

*I would like to send out a special thank you to Mr. Marc Warren for everything you have done for me and for everything you have done for everybody else. You are an inspiration, sir. You're one of the biggest motivators I have ever met in my life and I hope that you continue to motivate and inspire other students, like you inspired me.*

## TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY



### Thank you, Mrs. Foley

**Author:** Jessica Bromley

**Teacher's name:** Mrs. Mary Foley

**Teacher's school:** Sacred Heart All-Grade

*Mrs. Foley has a passion for teaching, watching students learn and grow, and a huge heart like no other. She holds so much love for all of the children that have ever been in her presence.*

*Mrs. Foley is always ready for a challenge, especially when grades continued to combine within her classroom, and she always succeeded, no matter what demands were placed upon her. Her involvement and dedication in all events within our school, our church, and our community has not gone unnoticed over the years, and she continues to make her presence known in all events within our school and community since her retirement in June 2015.*

*I first came to know Mrs. Foley as my teacher in Grade 1. She taught me from Grade 1 until Grade 3, and she remained active in all of my school years at Sacred Heart until I graduated. In my early school years, I had already had so much respect for Mrs. Foley that I told her that I wanted to grow up and become a teacher just like her; and so I did.*

Violence against teachers is more prevalent in primary and elementary level students than high school students, he said.

He's seen bite marks on teachers – assaults that are the result of teachers in much lower grades than high school, he said.

“The fighting, the scratching, the kicking, the spitting, the verbal assaults in many cases... people might not think that five or six or seven or eight year olds could be violent. But, I've seen firsthand the effects when students have gone off on teachers.”

Ingram recalls a situation where he went into a school where a student – within minutes – had trashed an office.

“Another school I was in over the lunch hour, there was a safe schools protocol called. And what struck me were two things: the teachers in the lunchroom didn't react. For me, I would think that as being something severe. But the teachers in that school didn't have that strong reaction. Because it's something that's not out of the norm for them,” Ingram said.

He went to investigate further why the safe schools protocol was called and found that the three special rooms designated for disruptive students all were occupied.

“For that to be the norm, to have three students who needed to be isolated on the lunch hour, that speaks to the intensity of the problem... that's problematic,” Ingram said.

Ingram said as a teacher, you are there to help others. In a province that relies heavily on volunteers, he said, you'll find teachers and retired teachers continue to give of their time for the benefit of their community.

While Ingram's name is in the news often because of his leadership role with the NLTA he made headlines in June when he was presented with a Governor-General's Medal of Bravery for rescuing a woman from a burning car near Arnold's Cove on April 21, 2015.

The woman and her son were trapped in their vehicle after a head-on collision, and flames were quickly growing in the engine compartment of the car. After bystanders rescued the boy, Ingram calmed the



Dean Ingram receiving the Medal of Bravery



panicking mother as he forced the driver side door open and pulled her to safety.

In terms of personal support, Ingram said his wife Cassandra and 15-year-old son Michael understand the importance of his job and why it often takes him away from them.

"There are many times when my wife has had to pick up the slack when I'm away doing this work that I enjoy and that I feel is so very important for the teachers in the province. I would not be able to do this if I didn't have their love and support." ■

*Up Close* DEAN INGRAM

**TEACHERS CHANGE  
LIVES EVERY DAY**



**Thank you, Mrs. Walsh**

Author: Ashley Hayward

Teacher's name: Mrs. Walsh

Teacher's school: St. John Bosco

*As I am graduating high school this year, I can say that for the four years I had Mrs. Walsh as an English teacher she left a huge impact on my life. Mrs. Walsh is the quintessence of an outstanding educator.*

*Growing up in a small community and going to a K-9 school with a student population of a little over two-hundred had its advantages and disadvantages. In a tight-knit community, everyone knows each other. This more often times than not resulted in students being labelled. Mrs. Walsh did not ever do this; instead she viewed everyone as equals and took an initiative to help those that were troubled rather than judging them.*

*While understanding everyone's unique abilities she always set high expectations for all of her students. Her teaching methods improved my abilities substantially and have helped me through high school.*

*I would like to say thank you for everything you do, as you always go the extra mile to help everyone. Thank you for helping me get to where I am today.*



## DEAN INGRAM'S commitments as **NLTA PRESIDENT**

As President of NLTA, Dean Ingram is chair of the Provincial Executive Council and the Table Officers' Committee of the Association. Provincially, he represents the NLTA in liaison meetings with organizations such as the Department of Education, Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of School System Administrators, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils. Nationally, he serves on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and he has represented the NLTA at the annual general meetings of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and at meetings of the Council of Atlantic Provinces' and Territory's Teachers Organizations (CAPTTO).

# Silicosis

## A Miner's Disease



By Jean Graham

**"Do you know what silica is? It's like shards of glass. It gets into your lungs, where it cuts and heals up, cuts again and heals up again, and eventually it turns into cancer. You can't get it out of your lungs. All they can do is get you out of a dusty [work] area and into one with less dust."**



**Ron Thomas**

The speaker is Ron Thomas, president of United Steelworkers Local 5795. He's talking about the mining byproduct that causes silicosis, which the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety describes more clinically this way: "... an incurable lung disease caused by inhaling dust that contains free crystalline silica ... Silica dust particles are small in size and can reach deep into the lungs (to the alveoli). The dust particles which land on these surfaces are removed by white blood cells known as macrophages. However, particles of free crystalline silica cause the macrophages to break open, which form scar-like patches on the surface of the alveolus. When a large number of these 'scars' form, the alveolar surface becomes less elastic. This effect reduces the transfer of gases, which can lead to shortness of breath."

Silicosis can take decades to develop in a person's lungs to the point that it can be detected by medical personnel. And we have a history in Canada, as elsewhere in the world, of denying it's work-related.



Silicosis is not a new phenomenon. The word itself has been in use since 1870, when Achille Visconti named it as a specific form of pneumoconiosis found in miners and others who worked with silica, which is one of the most common elements on earth. Even in ancient Rome and ancient Greece, people recognized that breathing in dust (including from work as a sculptor) could cause work-related respiratory problems.

In 1713, Bernardino Ramazzini (a.k.a. “The Father of Occupational Medicine”) described the lungs of stonecutters, including his observations of their asthma-like symptoms and the observable deposits of sand-like material in the lungs, in the second edition of his definitive work *De Morbis Artificum Diatriba* [Diseases of Workers].

Silicosis became much more frequent as technology

progressed. Both the pneumatic hammer drill (introduced to workplaces in 1897) and the process of sandblasting (introduced around 1904) increased the volume of dry dust workers were inhaling.

Iron ore has been mined in Ron's part of the world since 1954, when the first ore left Schefferville, Quebec, 200 km north of Labrador City. First ore was mined by the Iron Ore Company of Canada (then shortened to IOCC, later IOC) in Labrador West in 1962; by 1989 a billion tonnes of ore had been extracted.

Ron Thomas is 46 today; by the time he was born in Labrador West, the mining operations there were well underway.

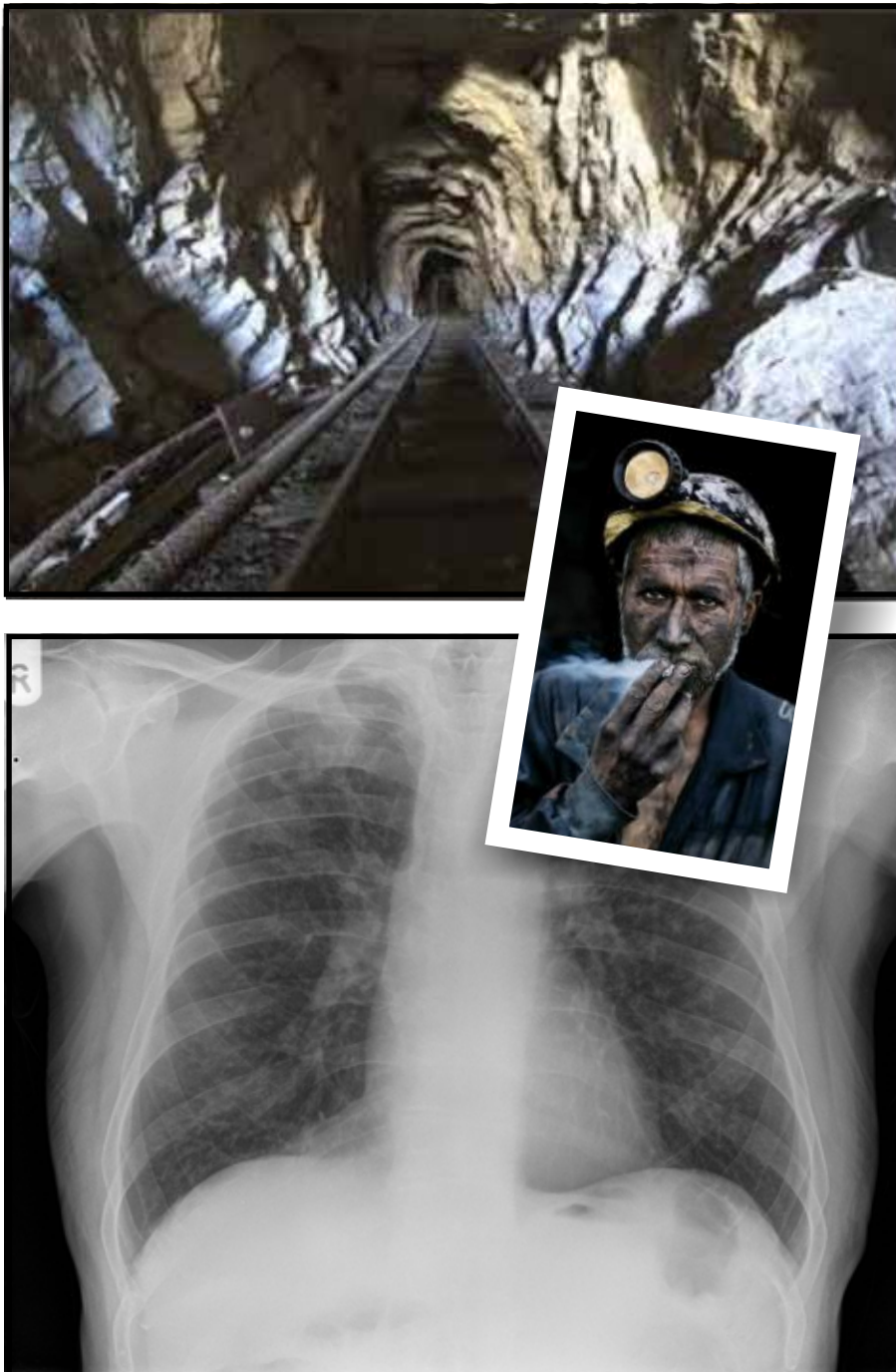
For as long as he can remember, dust – the particular reddish-purple dust of the iron mine – has been a part of his life. One of his earliest memories is of playing in dust-infused snow.

“You’d be out playing in a snowbank and you’d get the different layers of dirt in the snow,” he says. Every snowfall would leave a fresh white surface. Inevitably, the stacks would spew out dust to leave a layer of colour in the snow. Like a geological record, you could read the alternating layers of snow and dirt.

In those days, Labrador West ore was all “dry grind” – it

**Silicosis became much more frequent as technology progressed.**

**Both the pneumatic hammer drill (introduced to workplaces in 1897) and the process of sandblasting (introduced around 1904) increased the volume of dry dust workers were inhaling.**



was processed without the use of any water at all. Water, as you'd expect, keeps the dust levels down, both inside and outside the mine. The dry grind creates more dust, and it was everywhere.

IOC started switching to a complete, and safer, wet grind process in the late 1980s; the last of the dry mills was shut down in 2013, as a massive and atypical boom cycle in the mine was ending.

Canadian workers have travelled a long road to linking silicosis with workplace conditions.

We've known what silicosis is – and what causes it – for a long time. In 1931, a Dr. J.G. Cunningham, Director of the Division of Industrial Hygiene, Ontario Department of Health published an article in the Labour Gazette.

“The subject of silicosis has deservedly received increased attention within the last few years,” he wrote. The lung diseases due to dust inhalation referred to ... as pneumoconiosis, or as miners' phthisis and silicosis, are designated as compensable in the Workmen's Compensation Acts of Ontario and Alberta. They are compensable in Nova Scotia and British Columbia under the heading of diseases due to occupation, while in Manitoba and Saskatchewan legislation in

regard to compensation is pending.”

His division had surveyed Ontario miners in the 1920s. They found few cases of silicosis in Sudbury (where nickel, copper and silver were mined) and Cobalt (where, despite its name, silver was the main ore mined at the time) where “the amount of free silica in the ore and country rock is low,” Cunningham concluded.

“Cases were also few in Kirkland Lake where the camp is of recent origin” – remember that we know silicosis can take 30 years to develop – “while in Porcupine [a gold mine in the Timmins area], among 236 workers nearly all with over five years under ground exposure to

silica dust, there were 46 cases of silicosis” – about 20% of the workers tested.

It's difficult to fathom that in some parts of the country – in Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, and Western Labrador where Ron Thomas represents the Steelworkers – miners and their unions still have a struggle to prove that workers with silicosis should be eligible for workers' compensation.

The first step, Ron says, was convincing doctors that their patients were ill because they worked in a dusty environment with a high silica content. It didn't take the doctors long to get on side, and then commenced the long, frustrating work of

**But silica is a very common element, found in all kinds of sand and rock. Silicosis is a risk in other kinds of mining, including the mining of metals, such as gold, copper and zinc. But it's also a hazard in other industries.**

Ron Thomas: “...there's a monument in the town, and a lot of my co-workers have their names on the monument.” ▶





convincing the company and the government.

Hired at the mine in 1990 as an electrician, Ron has been a full-time union employee since 2006; he spent five years as Vice-President, and has been president for six. He's helped a lot of people win workers' compensation cases. A lot of them are retired miners, his father's contemporaries, but not all.

You'd think it would be straightforward. Basically, says Ron, "If you've got fibrous material in your lung, it's either asbestos or silica." There's no asbestos in the iron ore in Labrador. There was some used in buildings on the site years ago, but it's long gone. A couple of mechanics in Labrador City developed asbestosis from working on brakes over the years, but they were rare cases.

Silicosis starts with a person having trouble breathing. In an environment as hyper-aware of the condition as Labrador West is now, this sort of symptom will trigger an X-ray. Particular types of spots on the X-ray image call for a biopsy. If the biopsy's results look like silica, the worker puts in a claim with Workplace NL, the Newfoundland and Labrador government division that handles workers' compensation.

There are then often years of grievances and appeals to file, all while a worker's incurable condition continues to progress.

Even a win isn't always final.

"When it comes to an appeal – there's one case we won in 2013-14, the company is appealing that," he says. It's clear that this is a process he's far too familiar with, and thinks very little of.

"A lot of our members are frustrated. The retirees are really upset. They keep getting their lungs checked."

People who spent decades working at IOC never know when an X-ray will show a spot that will require a biopsy. And

then they're going down the road so many other Labrador iron workers have travelled.

Ron and the Steelworkers have had to fight for regulation and legislation that will help their cause. Progress does come, slowly.

In 2006, a Silica Code of Practice was adopted for industry in the province (it's the only result you get when you search "silicosis" on the Workplace NL website).

Despite this, and specific provisions in the province's workplace safety regulations, the incidence of silicosis in Labrador West continued to increase. In 2010, the government agreed to a medical review of X-Rays, put out a tender for the service – and nothing happened for several

years. And when it was finally conducted, the people of Labrador City are not particularly reassured. The silica dust study has caused more confusion than clarity. Of 636 participants, 86 showed dust exposure requiring follow-up, and 36 showed signs of silicosis.

Those numbers are nowhere near the 20% found in 1930 in Porcupine, but they're far from reassuring. Especially when you consider that some of the people who were told by the study they didn't show signs of silicosis are actually previously confirmed to have it.

"We have four members who've actually had lobes removed and they came back with a clean bill of health," Ron says. "Four still have silica in their lungs, but the study said they were fine."



# Jean Moses

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"They were pissed. They were absolutely pissed."

That's a lot of disparities for a study that covered only 700 people. "And that's just the ones I know of."

The miners of Labrador West are poised to start another cycle of educating workers. The workforce at IOC right now is a relatively young one.

Ron with his 27 years of experience is number 200 in seniority from the top of a list of about 1400 workers. A decade or two ago, he would have been much nearer the bottom of the seniority list. But today, most of the mineworkers have 12 years or less experience. It's hard, as always, for the young to absorb the threat of a disease that might or might not hit them 30 years down the road seriously.

"It's hard to beat that into their heads. They don't really take it as serious as we would like," says Ron.

I ask Ron what it's like dealing with the deaths of co-workers and friends.

"We had a rougher time last year with the suicides." In 2016, five people in Western Labrador – all connected with IOC – killed themselves. At the time, people in Labrador West said the deaths were reflective of the hostile work environment at the mines. Ron and his colleagues were dealing with thousands of

grievances.

But there's a monument in the town and "A lot of my co-workers have their names on the monument."

It's as dusty now in Labrador City as it was when Ron Thomas was playing in those snowbanks with the layers of dust.

"You can't leave furniture out on your patio overnight for the dust," he says. "I tore down a clothesline this year. What's the use? You can't use it." Anything that stays outdoors for any length of time attracts the silica-laden dust.

Ron tells me about the deck he built with pressure-treated lumber, which he coated with a good layer of Thompson's Water Seal – a wise course of prevention anywhere else. In Labrador City, the Thompson's creates a surface for dust to adhere to, and now Ron has a deck the distinctive purplish colour of the Labrador iron ore.

One final point: Ron Thomas and his co-workers in Labrador West know silicosis as a devastating illness of miners.

But silica is a very common element, found in all kinds of sand and rock. Silicosis is a risk in other kinds of mining, including the mining of metals, such as gold, copper and zinc. But it's also a hazard in other industries.

J.F.S. Sauve points out in a 2015 article in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* that

inhaled sand is a risk in fracking, engineered countertop manufacturing, and construction – and particularly difficult to control in the latter because the worksites are temporary with small numbers of employees, which combines with the varying amount of silica dust to make it tricky to identify who is at risk of contracting silicosis and how great the risk is for any individual worker. •



## Occupational Lung Disease

# Dying for work...



# Study of Work Injury Experiences among Mobile Workers from Newfoundland and Labrador

SafetyNet

MEMORIAL  
UNIVERSITY

Centre for Occupational Health & Safety Research

## *Do you have a story to share?*

**A new study at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the University of Ottawa is exploring how 'mobile workers' from Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) – those who travel out-of-province or offshore for work – who are injured or made ill by their work experience the process of accessing workers' compensation and the process of return-to-work often required by compensation commissions.**



*By Dana Howse*

A large body of research in the field of work and health has examined return-to-work and compensation policies and programs around the world, to identify strengths and weaknesses and to explore ways to sustainably return injured and ill workers to the labour force. In Canada, the provincially administered workers' compensation system is the main provider of disability insurance and return-to-work programming to injured and ill workers and their families. However, little research has examined the effectiveness of the application of workers' compensation legislation in Canada, despite evidence that different types of workers benefit differently (or not at all) from some compensation policies and programs.

With steady changes in population demographics, options for travel, resource development and employment opportunities, many Canadians are travelling away from their home communities and, in some cases provinces for work. This mobile work is often characterized by lengthy distance and travel between work and home, and multi-day, weekly or monthly 'turn-arounds' or rotations which can keep workers away from home for long stretches of time. People who work away from where they live and who sustain injury or illness while doing that work may experience greater difficulties accessing compensation and returning to work than those who work close to where they live.

Return to work for mobile workers may be complicated by employer practices that require the injured worker to be physically present for medical assessments or a gradual return to work arrangement, especially when the return to work plan involves a

work schedule or mobility supports that are different from those available in the pre-injury job. Other possible impediments to return to work may include a lack of rehabilitation facilities where the injured worker lives or required workers' compensation evaluations (i.e., fitness for work assessment) that cannot be completed near the worker's home. Modified work and/or retraining programs may introduce changes in shift lengths and turn-around schedules, which can disrupt the workers' family and home life, create challenges related to caregiving, and keep workers away from home for longer periods during a time when they are unwell and might typically rely on family for support.

The Return to Work among Mobile Workers from Newfoundland and Labrador study is interviewing adult workers who live or were living in NL while working in another province or territory or offshore and who were injured or made ill by their work in the past 5-7 years. This study is part of a larger, national program of research that includes similar research on other types of work situations including temporary, seasonal, part-time, self-employment and minimum wage types of employment in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta. The goal of the broader study is to examine the policy effectiveness of regulatory frameworks designed to prevent work disability and promote return to work of injured workers after employment-related injury, and to protect workers from discrimination based on disability or functional limitations associated with a work-related injury or illness. The larger program of research is funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) Partnership Development Grant (Healthy and Productive Work) and is headed up by Professor Katherine Lippel, Canada

Research Chair in Occupational Health and Safety Law at the University of Ottawa.

Are you a mobile worker from NL who sustained a work injury or illness while working offshore or in another province or territory in the past 5-7 years? If so, we invite you to contact us as soon as possible to discuss being an interview participant in this study. We would like to speak with you about your experience with work-related injury/illness while working away including what happened, how the injury/illness was handled, whether or not you were compensated for time loss, treatment, etc. and your experience with return to work. We want to understand how working outside NL or offshore affected your injury/illness experience, your relationship with your employer, with other employers, health care providers and workers' compensation. Where you were able to return to work, we are interested in the impact of the return to work process on your longer term work options and your family and home lives.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and involves being available for a confidential telephone interview. If you currently live in Newfoundland and Labrador in the St. John's region, an in-person interview may be possible. The interview will last about 1 to 1.5 hours, depending on how much you have to say. There is no need to prepare for this interview. It will be like a conversation and you will choose what to share with us. As a token of our thanks we will offer you \$50 to cover your time (and any travel costs) related to the interview. Everything you tell us in the interview will be confidential. Presentations of study results will not include your name or any information that could identify you. The study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University.

If you are interested in participating or learning more, please

contact Dana Howse at the SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Research by email: [dhowse@mun.ca](mailto:dhowse@mun.ca) or phone: 1-709-864-7249. She will answer any questions. ■



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# Marijuana

**Weed, Pot, Reefer,  
Grass, Dope,  
Ganja, Mary Jane,  
Herb, Skunk.**

## in the Workplace

**Call it what you  
want but with  
legalization it will  
affect Canadian  
workplaces.**

**By Erica Yetman**

**T**he usage of recreational marijuana among Canadians young and old is higher now than during the era of free love and free smoke in the 60's, with a 2012 report claiming 53% of Canadians aged 18-44 have used marijuana at least once in their lifetimes.

Marijuana has been an ever increasing problem in our country, not because of the danger it poses, but because of the lack of knowledge about how to handle its users.

In less than a year it will be as easy to come by as a bottle of wine or a pack of cigarettes. And then what?

Most professionals know that you can't down a bottle of Merlot and head into the office, but what about smoking a doobie on your way to work? A midday break for a puff from your pipe? What if that's your medicine, the same to you as taking an advil for a headache?



**The Liberals  
campaigned on the  
promise of  
legalization  
and though we might  
bleed red, Canada is  
seeing green.**

These are questions that need to be answered before marijuana becomes legalized. But even then, what will the workplace standards be for recreational marijuana use?

Employment lawyer David Whitten, in an interview with CTV, said that employers have to be aware of their legal obligations when dealing with an employee with a medical marijuana prescription.

"Employers are going to ignore Mary Jane at their own peril," Whitten told CTV News in an interview. "She's coming to the dance whether they like it or not."

In Canada, marijuana is the most commonly used "illicit" drug with one third of young adults aged 15-24 reporting usage in the last year according to Stats Canada.

Whitten suggest that employers who are faced with medical cannabis in the workplace should first read up on the plants medicinal abilities.

"The reality is that we've recognized this as having



**Health Canada estimates that 450,000 Canadians will turn to using legal medical marijuana by 2024**

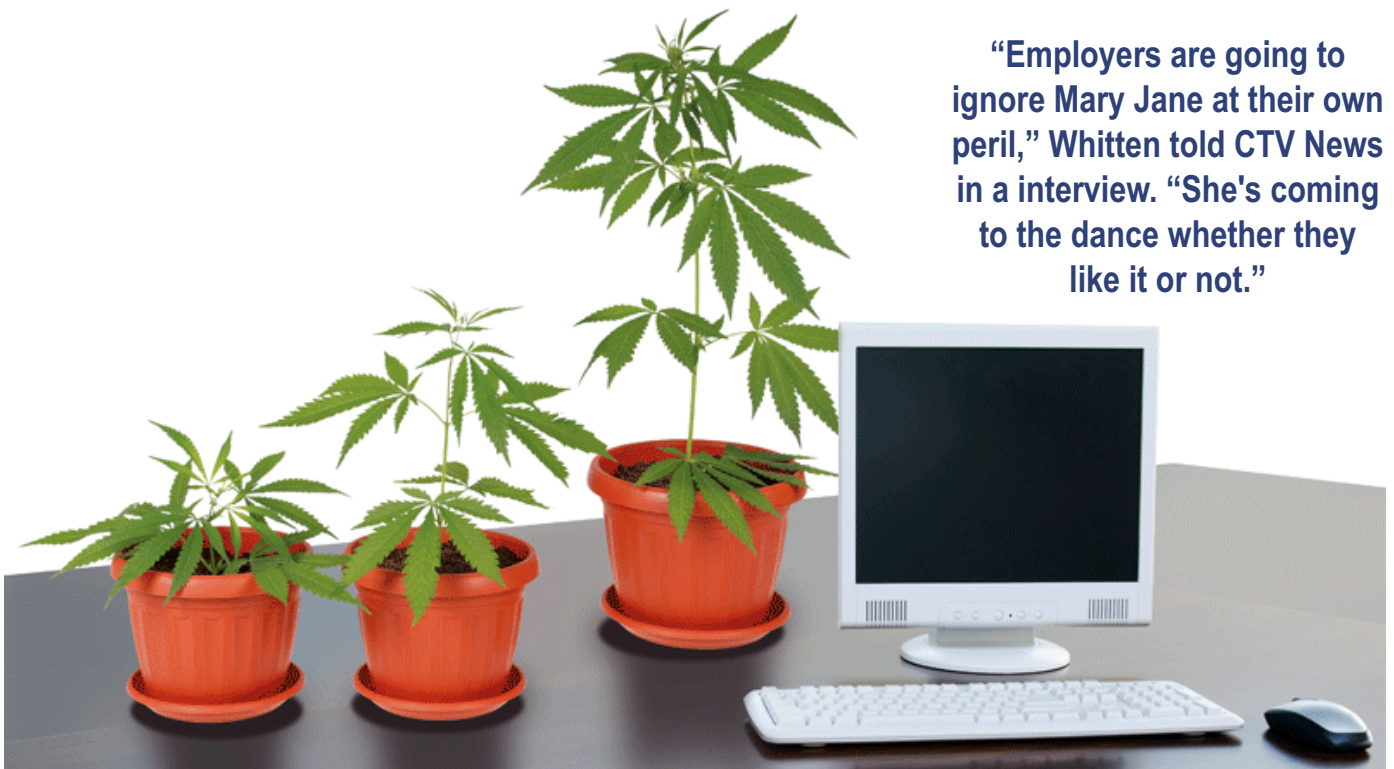
medicinal qualities," Whitten said to CTV News.

"So keep a straight face when somebody comes to you with a prescription, understanding that it needs to be treated legally like any other medication."

Health Canada reports show that at the end of 2016 there was up to 130,000 Canadians legally using marijuana for medical purposes, a stark difference from the just 7,000 patients prescribed medical cannabis in 2014.

The increase in users comes with recent acceptance of the various medicinal purposes the cannabis plant can offer. Canadians are using it for a

**"Employers are going to ignore Mary Jane at their own peril," Whitten told CTV News in an interview. "She's coming to the dance whether they like it or not."**





myriad of reasons from PTSD and anxiety to a treatment for various degenerative diseases such as parkinson's, alzheimer's and some cancers.

Workers Voice had the opportunity to speak with an occupational health and safety nurse working in a high level position with a major Canadian based oil and gas company, who is responsible for the drug and alcohol program. For the purposes of this article he will be referred to as Mr. OG (Oil & Gas).

"It's really about trying to manage fit-ness in the workplace. All protocols with regards to drug testing, drug panels and drug screening will remain unchanged." Said Mr. OG.

"Current protocols follow the department of transportation in the United States model, which tests for the most commonly found substances in North American workplaces."

Several states in America have legalized marijuana for recreational purposes including California, Ohio, Nevada and Washington.

"One of the big limitations in testing THC is you cannot

**Employers have a duty to accommodate, if you don't make your employer aware of your situation, they are unable to accommodate your needs.**

measure impairment with alcohol and drug testing as it pertains to marijuana." said Mr. OG.

"All it will tell you is presence or absence in the test. It will not tell you if someone is impaired or not."

According to the Canadian Centre for occupational health and safety some of the major side effects of marijuana include distorted sense of time, impaired memory, impaired coordination - all of which would be a safety hazard in the workplace.

"The only approach can be a zero tolerance test, if you test positive you fail the test." said Mr. OG.

Exceptions can be made, however, for employees with authorization from their doctor to use cannabis as a medical treatment. Each employee is assessed on an individual basis, as cannabis may have a different effect on each user, due to the various factors involved with the plant.

"It's the same approach as we would look at any drug that's being prescribed that may have an impact on health and safety because of its side effects." said Mr. OG.

"We put a plan in place to assess the impact of the drug on the person, just like we would if someone was coming in with a sleeping pill or an opiate."

The difference between an employee using medical cannabis and a pharmaceutical is a big one. Most drugs on the market have a fairly predictable list of side effects, only last for a certain amount of time and are available in supply dosages.

Marijuana however, can have a different affect on its user during every usage. It can be



ingested through various means, dosages are almost impossible to determine given the variation in THC and CBD levels across strains, and it has an accumulative effect that other drugs do not.

Given the unpredictable nature of how cannabis will impact its users, it makes it more difficult for employers to put a plan in place for dealing with employees using medical cannabis. Because of this it is crucial employees are looked at on a case by case basis.

"We would look at the job role, the risks of the job as it pertains to safety and cognitive ability and we would work with the healthcare providers to either accommodate the person, find an alternate solution or - if it was determined that there was no risk - we would send the person back to work." said Mr. OG.

While being impaired in the workplace is a big no-no, there are ways employees can work with their employers to determine the best route for which they can continue their treatment while not endangering

the workplace.

"There's a very limited suite of illnesses that there's actually any evidence that it (medical cannabis) works for, and the majority of those illnesses are not compatible with someone going to work." said Mr. OG. "

But if you are someone using cannabis for medical purposes, Mr. OG says the best thing you can do is be upfront and honest with your employer.

**"So keep a straight face when somebody comes to you with a prescription, understanding that it needs to be treated legally like any other medication."**

"Have a very candid and informed conversation with the physician about your requirement, and the evidence that this is the best or the only way to treat whatever their illness is..." said Mr. OG"

And certainly if they're considering going into a safety sensitive job I would suggest they look for an alternative treatment

or at the very least understand the impact it might have on them being hired in that type of role."

If an employee did chose to keep it from their employer and the information was to come out, Mr. OG said it's likely most companies would dismiss the employee.

"If it comes out after an incident or during a drug test most employers will absolutely take the action that you didn't disclose and probably terminate with cause," said Mr. OG

"And it would leave the person in a very weak position."

Employers have a duty to accommodate, if you don't make your employer aware of your situation, they are unable to accommodate your needs.

"If it's impacting your ability to do your work, or to be at work, you should really be upfront with your employer and have that conversation." said Mr. OG. ■

**Given the unpredictable nature of how cannabis will impact its users, it makes it more difficult for employers to put a plan in place for dealing with employees using medical cannabis.**







# Movement for \$15 Minimum Wage

**comes to  
Newfoundland & Labrador**

Anyone who's ever tried to live on a minimum wage job can tell you it's not easy.

Factor in dependents and it becomes downright impossible.

By Jean Graham

**M**inimum wage jobs don't always come with full-time hours, so our lowest-paid earners often hold two, three, or more part-time jobs and still have a tough time buying the basic necessities of life.

In our province, the minimum wage is among the lowest in the country, and will continue to be even after an Oct. 1 increase brings it to \$11 an hour. The provincial government is talking about indexing the minimum wage so it automatically increases every year – most likely to go along with the cost of living index.



**"The problem with indexing a poverty level wage is that by doing so you are essentially condemning the lowest-paid workers in your society to a lifetime of poverty."**

**"We are asking the provincial government to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour before the indexing starts. That way people have a shot at being able to feed their families."**

“The problem with indexing a poverty level wage,” says Newfoundland & Labrador's NDP Leader Earle McCurdy, “Is that by doing so you are essentially condemning the lowest-paid workers in your society to a lifetime of poverty.”

“We are asking the provincial government to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour before the indexing starts. That way people have a shot at being able to feed their families.”

On July 31 this year his party launched a petition calling on government to raise the minimum wage to \$15 before starting the indexing. Two days later, volunteers at the NDP booth at the annual Royal St. John's Regatta collecting hundreds of signatures on that

petition. Work will continue until the House of Assembly opens in the fall. At that time, elected representatives will present the petition each day.

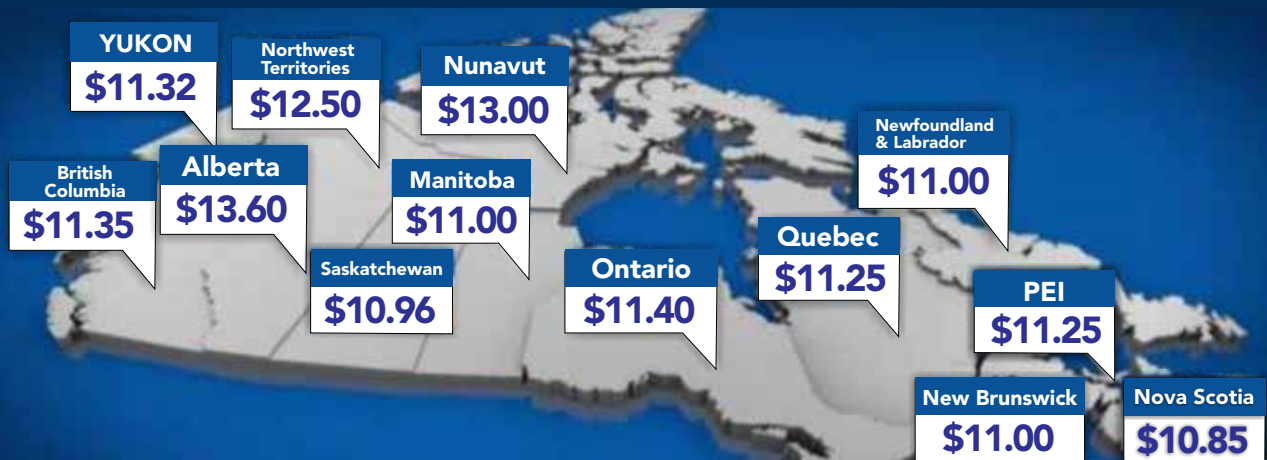
Last November, then-Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Gerry Byrne announced a small increase into the province's minimum wage, and added his plan to consult about implementing future increases in the legislation requires a review every two years, but does not specify how that review should be formatted. There has occasionally been a wide-ranging set of public hearings, allowing interested parties to present their view; at other times, the review has been a cursory glance-over by Cabinet, with no changes resulting.

Under Premier Danny Williams' anti-poverty action plan, the PC government introduced a series of minimum wage increases and by 2010, the province had among the highest minimum wages in the country. The wage stalled then, and now Newfoundland and Labrador is back among the lowest levels of minimum wage.

At the same time, the province's economy in general has tanked, prices on many staple items have skyrocketed, and low-waged earners are increasingly seen at food banks. In 2016, for the first time in several years, food bank usage was up in Newfoundland and Labrador. Eg Walters of the Community Food Sharing Association noted that almost 10 per cent of users said



## Minimum Wage Rates



Current minimum wage rates, including increases effective October 2107; there are plans for future increases in the New Year

**2017**



employment provided most of their household income, rather than the stereotypical pension or government welfare.

McCurdy has condemned the idea of indexing a poverty-level wage without first increasing that wage.

"If the indexing kicks in with our current minimum wage level, we are dooming our lowest-paid employees to poverty forever," he says.

Part of the NDP campaign is contradicting the many myths that persist about the subject of minimum wage. For example, many still think that increasing the minimum wage is a surefire way to decrease employment and send prices skyhigh.

It is precisely this sort of misinformation that inspire dozens of economists (53 at last count) to sign their names to a letter endorsing the \$15 minimum wage in Ontario.

(Read the letter at [http://www.progressive-](http://www.progressive-economics.ca/2017/06/29/economists-support-15-minimum-wage-in-ontario/)

[economics.ca/2017/06/29/economists-support-15-minimum-wage-in-ontario/](http://www.progressive-economics.ca/2017/06/29/economists-support-15-minimum-wage-in-ontario/))

The economists cite reams of academic studies that demonstrate that raising the minimum wage – even to the \$15 level as several US cities have done in recent years – does not decrease the number of jobs, that an increased minimum wage actually pays off



for businesses in lower turnover and higher productivity, and that prices do not skyrocket when minimum wages are increased.

As a matter of fact, McCurdy points out, cost

increases as a result of higher wages are likely minimized by the decreases training costs and increased productivity.)

And even if minor cost increases resulting from making the minimum wage a living wage, as the economists say, it's not reasonable to keep the working poor in poverty indefinitely so everyone can else can save a few pennies on a burger or a latte.

"To the wise words of the economists, I would add this thought," McCurdy said in a recent letter to The Western Star. "People earning minimum wage will almost immediately put their pay increases back into the local economy.

"Our lowest-paid workers are not setting up overseas tax shelters, but rather use the increased income for the immediate needs of their families, which in turn is a benefit to the local business community." ■





**I heard that increasing the minimum wage will wipe out jobs.**

This is a persistent argument, but it's not based in fact. Dozens of studies over decades of research show that an increased minimum wage has little to no impact on the number of jobs available.

**What about trickle-down economics? Doesn't it make more sense to reduce taxes and increase profits at the top?**

All the research shows that an increased minimum wage will "trickle up" through the economy. It makes sense – the highest earners are more likely to save or invest their extra money. Low-income earners spend it on basic needs; their money goes straight back into the local economy.

**The NDP's plan to raise minimum wage will make it harder on small businesses.**

The NDP supports small business. We have called for the elimination of the small business tax, a move that would help small business transition to a fairer minimum wage. And a higher minimum wage will benefit local business in the long run because low-wage workers spend new earnings on local goods and services. 38% of minimum wage earners work for large retail and food service chains,

and many of those workers rely on government-funded services to make ends meet. It's time for government to stop subsidizing the big chains.

**Don't we have one of the highest minimum wages in Canada?**

Not any more. Our minimum wage has only increased by 75 cents since 2010. We have one of the lowest in the country at \$10.75, and we will still have one of the lowest when it rises to \$11.00 in October.

**How does the Newfoundland & Labrador minimum wage measure up to inflation?**

Between 2010 and 2016, the minimum wage increased by 5% while the average cost of meat, eggs, produce and bread all increased by more than 20%.

**Is the minimum wage a living wage?**

No, it's a poverty wage. A person earning \$10.75/hr. working a 40-hr. week makes \$22,360, not much more than the before tax low-income cut-off of \$20,952.

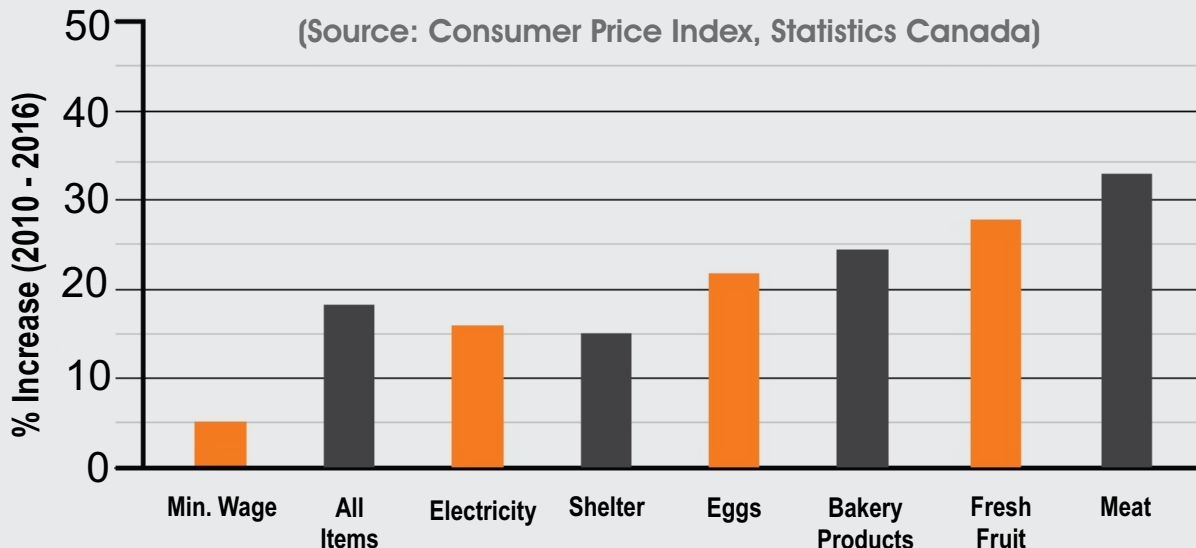
**Who are the people earning minimum wage?**

25% are teenagers. 50% are over 25. 66% are women. 51% work full-time. 65% are permanent employees.

**Okay....so what does the NDP want?**

We believe that nobody should work full-time and still live in poverty. We want to ensure that minimum wage workers are treated fairly! We want to: Gradually raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021 and index the minimum wage to the cost of living after 2021.

## MINIMUM WAGE VS COST INCREASES





Where  
do we  
grow  
from  
here?

**NEW**  
**Workers'**   
**Voice**  
independent. influential.  
relevant. balanced.

The New  
Workers'  
Voice is your  
voice.

Speak out  
and be  
heard.

Let's build  
something  
great together.

