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Releases

Labour Day Message from Jim Sinclair

Strong unions key to a healthy middle class

Labour Day is a day to reflect on the important role of working people in Canada's economy and our society, and on the gains we've made in the past 100 years. This Labour Day we also remember that it was working people banding together that brought us these gains.

It is all too easy today to take for granted the role of unions in improving our working lives. After all, the most significant successes of the labour movement have benefited all Canadian workers for decades. Whether it's the 40-hour work week, workplace safety requirements, or the weekend; they've all been a part of our workplaces for as long as most of us have had jobs. Long enough that most Canadians don't know that working people, through their unions, had to fight hard for each of these advances.

The work of today's unions is no less important. Today's unions are focused on making work safer, on ensuring that an honest forty hour work week pays the bills at the end of each month and leaves behind a little extra for savings, and on protecting the rights of individual workers when they are treated unfairly. When our governments try to lower wages and standards by making it easy for companies like Canadian Dehua coal mines and Tim Horton's coffee shops to bring in temporary foreign labour without the same rights as Canadians, it's unions that are standing up for Canadian jobs.

As the world becomes smaller with globalization, Canada’s unions have become more relevant than ever. Company profits are rising. But instead of sharing the profits as wages with their employees, too many companies are coming to the table demanding wage concessions, cuts to benefits, and longer work weeks. Too many employers are trying to increase their profits by cutting corners on safety. And too many employers are contracting out Canadian work to overseas contractors.

Working people through their unions are the one group standing up for the middle class and for good jobs. Our governments certainly aren’t.

So on this Labour Day, let’s remember that working people had to stand together to make the progress we’ve made. Let’s also remember that working people must stick together to continue to preserve our gains, and build the kind of Canada in which an honest day’s work is rewarded with respect, fair pay, and fair treatment.