In a time when workers’ rights are often taken for granted, it is no wonder that for a lot of us, the origins of Labour Day are not well known, but what has now largely evolved into an end of summer holiday for most of us began as a struggle and massive demonstration in the streets of Toronto. Labour Day in Canada has its origins with the 1872 printers’ strike in Toronto. The late 19th Century brought about a number of changes to Canada’s economy and workforce as immigration increased and industrialization spread. Many workers began to find that their special skills were no longer valued, and that they could easily be replaced if they complained or demanded better treatment, higher wages or better working hours from employers. It was in this context that on January 27, 1872 workers in Hamilton, Ontario organized the “Nine Hour Movement”. At a meeting of the Hamilton Mechanics Institute, members unanimously approved a resolution declaring the nine-hour movement to be a matter of social necessity, to “enable working men to improve their education and better meet their duties as fathers and citizens”. Inspired by the workers in Hamilton, the Toronto Typographical Union (which represented print workers in Toronto) also began to lobby for a shorter, nine-hour workday. At the time, unions were illegal in Canada, which was still operating under an archaic British law; although the laws criminalizing union activity were outdated and had already been abolished in Great Britain, they were still on the books in Canada.

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A Brief History of Labour Day

(Continued from page 1)

After being repeatedly ignored by their employers, the printers threatened to strike, which they did on March 25, 1872. The publishing industry in Toronto was paralyzed and soon other workers began to show their support. Less than three weeks after the beginning of the strike a group of 2000 workers marched through the streets in a show of solidarity. As they marched, more and more supporters joined in, and by the time the demonstration reached its conclusion 10,000 people (about a tenth of the population of Toronto at the time) had joined. However, because of the law criminalizing unions, 24 union leaders were arrested and charged with criminal conspiracy as a result of the protests. On September 3rd of that year, labour leaders called for similar demonstrations in protest of the arrests. Seven unions marched in Ottawa, and Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, ever the opportunist, began to see political benefit in siding with the workers, vowing to repeal the "barbarous" anti-union laws. Parliament then passed the Trade Union Act, which repealed the outdated British law and decriminalized unions; the strike leaders were then released from jail. Soon after almost all unions began to demand a nine-hour workday, and while the workers still did not immediately obtain their goal of a shorter workweek (and, in fact, many still lost their jobs) they did, however, discover that workers could gain the attention of their employers, the public, and most importantly, their political leaders if they stood together.

The demonstrations began to spread to other cities and eventually became an annual celebration of workers’ rights; the Toronto Trades and Labour Council began to hold celebrations every spring, and in 1882, invited Peter J. McGuire, co-founder of the American Federation of Labor to speak at a labour festival in Toronto. After returning to the United States, McGuire and the Knights of Labor organized a similar parade based on the Canadian event on September 5, 1882 in New York City, which became an annual event held each September. Over a decade later, in the summer of 1894, Canadian Prime Minister John Thompson and his government, following the advice of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital (1889), made Labour Day an official holiday to be held on the first Monday in September, and Canada celebrated its first official Labour Day on September 3 of that year.

Compared to the more established urban centres of eastern Canada, the relatively newer, smaller and less industrialized cities of late 19th century Alberta marked the first Labour Day with little fanfare; “Today is Labor day, or rather, no labor day,” the Edmonton Bulletin dryly commented in September 1894, “and as a consequence, the stores in town are closed.” Within a few years, however, each Labour Day was met with more enthusiasm, and Albertans began to enjoy the holiday in ways that would be familiar to us today, over a century later. While early Labour Day celebrations in Alberta were marked by sports, leisure and recreation, they had little to do with recognizing the working class. The rise of organized labour in Alberta shortly after the turn of the 20th century however, particularly in larger cities like Edmonton and Calgary, saw Labour Day morph into something more resembling the celebrations in eastern cities. Trade unions and other labour groups began to organize parades, speeches and labour-organized leisure events, not unlike the annual Labour Day Barbecue still put on each year by the Edmonton & District Labour Council (EDLC). So no matter how you choose to enjoy your Labour Day, take a minute to think about Canada’s labour pioneers. Their actions laid the foundations for future labour movements and helped workers to secure the rights and benefits we all enjoy today.
Comedy for a Cause—September 20, 2018

Brendan Van Alstine, NASA Communications Administrator

On Thursday, September 20th NASA will be marking our 40th anniversary and raising funds for a great cause with a stand-up comedy event at Yuk Yuk’s at the Century Casino (13103 Fort Road).

All proceeds from ticket sales from Comedy for a Cause go to support the Campus Food Bank, whose mission is to fight hunger on campus and which serves all campus community members.

The night will be headlined by Newfoundland-born comedian Lisa Baker, whose sharp wit and blue humour have led her to perform across western Canada. She has been featured on CBC’s Laugh Out Loud show, at the YYComedy Festival in Calgary and at the Prairie All Stars Show. Lisa has opened for the likes of Rob Schneider, Tom Green and Paul Reiser. The evening is sure to be hilarious and we hope that you’ll join us for a great night of laughs.

While tickets to a comedy event like this typically sell in the range of $20 to $25 we are offering a significant discount at only $12 per ticket for our members. Doors open at 7 PM and the show starts at 8 PM.

You can pick up your tickets at the NASA office during normal office hours -Monday-Friday 8:30 AM – 4:30 (we are open through the lunch hour).

Mark Your Calendar

**Comedy for a Cause**
**Thursday, September 20, 7pm-10pm at Yuk Yuks (Century Casino) - 13103 Fort Road**

**NASA 40th Crib & Catan Tournament**
**Saturday, October 20, 4th Floor Education (North) Atrium**

**NASA Fall General Meeting**
**Wednesday, November 7, 12pm-1pm in Dinwoodie Lounge (SUB)**
NASA Executive Board

Elizabeth Johannson, President (2018 – 2020)
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