

**THE CENTRAL VOICE OF LABOUR**

**IN NEW BRUNSWICK AFFAIRS**



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## **THE CENTRAL VOICE OF LABOUR IN NEW BRUNSWICK AFFAIRS**

Since its foundation in 1913, The New Brunswick Federation of Labour has been the central voice of Labour in New Brunswick's affairs. For over 100 years, the NBFL is playing a key role in the economic and social advancement of workers, their families and their communities. Solidarity and strength in the membership is our force.

Workers become members of a union because by joining together with others they are better able to defend their interests as workers. Your local union assures you of a fair deal with your employer. The New Brunswick Federation of Labour plays the same role with the provincial government by working tirelessly towards better labour legislation, workers compensation, workplace health and safety, the environment, health care and the many other matters of provincial concern as determined by the membership and that can affect you and your co-workers on a daily basis.

The responsibilities of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, or the NBFL as it's more commonly known, are spelled out in our Constitution adopted by delegates of local unions from throughout the province. They are:

- **To promote the interest of its affiliates and generally to advance the economic and social welfare of the workers of New Brunswick;**
- **To assist affiliated organizations in extending the benefits of collective bargaining for workers and to encourage workers to share in the full benefits of union organization;**
- **To secure provincial legislation which will safeguard and promote the principle of free collective bargaining, the rights of workers, and the security and welfare of all people;**
- **To aid and encourage the sale and use of union-made goods and union services through the use of the Union Label and other symbols; to promote the labour press and other means of furthering the education of the labour movement;**
- **While preserving the independence of the labour movement from political control, to encourage workers to vote, to exercise their full rights and responsibilities of citizenship and to perform their rightful part in the political life of the municipal, provincial and federal governments.**

The NBFL has a paid membership of **40,000**, which is made up of individual members of **324** local union affiliates, and **7** local labour councils which represent the districts of the, Bathurst, Edmundston, Fredericton, Miramichi, Moncton, Restigouche, and Saint John. Although not all locals belong, most industrial and public sector unions in New Brunswick are represented in the membership of the Federation with a total of **18** unions presently part of the NBFL.

In late May or early June, delegates of affiliates of the NBFL hold a **biennial convention** to discuss matters of common concern and exercise their democratic right as members. Together, they decide on the policies and issues to be pursued over the next two years. An education conference is held in non-convention years.

Approximately **60** resolutions are usually submitted and handled at each convention. These deal with provincial government departments and activities, as well as issues requiring the attention of the Canadian Labour Congress, or the officers of the Federation. Resolutions approved by the convention provide guidance to the officers of the Federation between conventions as to what the membership requests in terms of legislation and other concrete action.

The governing body of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour is a 25 member **Executive Council** made up of a full-time President, a First Vice-President, a Second Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, a Women's Vice-President who shall be a women and a Young worker Vice-President age 35 or under, as well as 12 Vice-Presidents representing Union organizations and, one Vice-President from each affiliated labour council.

The President, Secretary-Treasurer, First and Second Vice-Presidents, the Vice-President of Women's Issues and the Vice-President for Young Workers are elected by delegates at the biennial convention. Of these positions, at least one must be a **woman** and at least one must be a **francophone**.

As per our Constitution, **Union organizations** representation on the Executive Council is based on their affiliated membership size.

- Each Union with an average yearly membership of 5,000 or more members affiliated with the Federation is entitled to two (2) Vice-Presidents.
- Each Union with an average yearly membership of 1,000 or more members but less than 5,000 members affiliated with the federation is entitled to one (1) Vice-President.
- Unions with an average yearly affiliated membership of under 1,000 are in combination entitled to two (2) Vice-Presidents.

Each Labour Council is entitled to appoint one person to the NBFL Executive Council.

The Executive Council governs the Federation between conventions and usually meets twice a year. In between meetings, the **Executive Officers** - the President, Secretary-Treasurer, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Vice-President for Women's Issues and Vice-President for Young Workers provide direction to the staff in the day to day operations of the Federation. These positions are held by **Patrick Colford** a member of CUPE Local 865, – President; **John Gagnon**, a member of USW Local 5385 – Secretary-Treasurer; **Chuck Rouse**, a member of Unifor Local 506 – First Vice-President; **Paula Doucet-Jones**, a member of NBNU Local 70 – Second Vice-President, **Odette Robichaud** a member of CUPE Local 1840 – Vice-President for Women's Issues and **Christopher Watson** a member of CUPE Local 380– Vice President for Young Workers.

Apart from the President, all members of the Executive Council are part-time, voluntary officers. The **full-time staff** of the Federation is made up of Executive Assistant, Anne Robichaud; Communication/Research Assistant and Financial/Administrative Assistant, Jody Dallaire.

**Specific activities** of the NBFL include: meetings with government to discuss pressing membership concerns; presentation of special briefs as circumstances warrant; strike support and establishment of financial appeals, upon request, for any affiliate engaged in strike action for 3 weeks or more; organization of educational conferences and seminars; awarding of a annual scholarships and bursaries totaling \$2500, the Blair Doucet Youth Summer Camp and representation on various boards and commissions. Among bodies on which the NBFL has representation are the following:

- Labour and Employment Board
- CLC Executive Council
- Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board
- WorkSafe NB Appeals Tribunal
- Common Front for Social Justice
- NB Committee on Literacy
- NB Population Growth Secretariat
- NDP Provincial Executive
- GrowthWorks Atlantic Venture Fund

- Coalition for Pay Equity
- NB Health Coalition
- NB Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents' Rights

The Federation also has several **standing committees**, made up of members of affiliates, which meet to initiate and coordinate activities in their respective areas of responsibility. They include:

- Education Committee
- Political Education Committee
- Women's Committee
- Young Workers Committee
- Occupational Health, Safety and Environment Committee

Per capita tax to finance the operations of the Federation and its standing committees is \$1.05 per member, per month, and is billed bi-annually in January and July. This is the cost of membership in the NBFL.

There never seems to be any shortage of issues facing workers, ensuring that the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, which has always been active in the past, will continue to be so in the future. The demands on the Federation in the areas of membership education, public awareness, lobby efforts, political action, labour disputes and other assistance to affiliates will continue to grow as workers strive to improve their social, economic and working lives.

A strong Federation will assure that New Brunswick workers have the power to control their fate on the provincial level. The role of the Federation can only be as effective as unionists in the Province make it. This requires active participation on the part of those local unions already affiliated and a willingness to affiliate by those locals which continue to remain outside the provincial house of labour.