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Canadian LabourWatch Association

Labour Day Poll

***What Canada's "Labourers" Are Really Thinking
This Labour Day***

FULL REPORT

Exclusive to National Post and Le Journal de Montréal



A NATIONAL POST / LE JOURNAL DE MONTRÉAL LABOUR DAY POLL

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Canadian LabourWatch Association

Introduction

POLLING – WHY?

Five years ago we polled 1,000 employed Canadians and the results surprised many experts. We are pleased that our Members enabled us to do so again for Labour Day 2008.

Once again the research identified fundamental disconnects between what workers want and most Canadian public policy and labour law regarding unionization. This same disconnect exists between the actions of union leaders and the opinions of the workers union leaders want to unionized or already represent.

As in the 2003 Leger survey, the 2008 Nanos random representative survey Report and detailed data sheets we provide online show the results for 3 groups of respondents:

- Currently unionized.
- Formerly unionized.
- Never unionized.

This is very important. Upon review you will see important differences in what Canada's labourers really are thinking this labour day!

For example, union leaders oppose secret ballot votes and favour card certification – a non-democratic method that is open to abuse. Unionized Canadians are 88% in favour of votes over cards. But, we are not aware of any single traditional union that supports rather than fights to have laws that deny secret ballot votes. Over half of our 11 private sector labour codes still deny votes to workers in the twenty-first century.

Another example: none of these 11 labour codes gives the same level of free speech to employers as to unions. This abrogates workers' Charter freedom of expression rights to hear – to be informed when making important decisions.

A final example, from the many in the survey, is the issue of union dues. In 1991, Canada's Supreme Court ruled, on the facts of the Lavigne case (and overturned two lower courts in Ontario), that the union in question could spend the union dues of a unionized worker, who was not also a union member, on political and other non-bargaining activities. While today, what appears to be lawful and Canada, but no longer lawful in any other country we know of – is still out of step with the views of Canadians. Most significantly, it goes against the views of 79% of unionized Canadians. Yet union leaders keep on doing it.

Our polling is intended to increase awareness and enable stakeholders in the public policy process to more accurately debate these issues and bring Canadian law into line with the trends in international law.

LabourWatch Mandate

We are a non-profit association formed in the year 2000. Our mandate is advancing employee rights regarding unionization; our slogan is informed employees/informed choices. Workers who want to:

- become unionized;
- remain unionized; or
- switch unions,

almost always have the significant support of well-funded unions with capable professionals to help them pursue their legal and human rights to associate with a union.

However, employees who wish to remain or become union-free, unionized workers who are disciplined, expelled or sued by their union do not have nearly the same resources as their pro-union co-workers. Today no portion of union dues goes into any form of legal aid fund that a unionized worker or a potentially unionized worker can access. When legal proceedings take place such as application for certification or decertification of a union, unfair labour practice charges or unionized employees legal cases with a union, the reality is unjust. The union is usually represented by an expert labour lawyer in front of a labour board or court while the worker is usually absent or their alone with no lawyer. Employers are generally limited in comparison to the union in the extent to which they can help the affected worker(s). This is a biased system.

LabourWatch provides practical tools for these disadvantaged workers, such as access to simplified instructions and government forms for all 11 private sector labour codes across Canada whereby they can seek to:

- Cancel a signed union card.
- Apply to decertify a union.
- Charge a union with unfair labour practices.

We also provide a wealth of research and speaker tours to educate Canadians on the power imbalance built into the system that tips the field in favour of union leaders and against union-free workers as well as under-served and persecuted unionized workers.

Our Guiding Principles on our website are an outline for fundamental public policy reform.

We commend this expert research to you and invite all comments and criticisms.

Sincerley,



John Mortimer



LabourWatch
Survey of Employed
Canadians

submitted
August 2008

1.0 Methodology

The purpose of public opinion research is to identify perceptions within reliable and acceptable statistical margins of accuracy. To that end, Nanos Research was retained to conduct a public opinion survey of employed Canadians for LabourWatch on a range of workplace issues.

As part of a random representative sample of opinion, a total of 1,000 telephone interviews were conducted with employed Canadians between July 27th and August 6th, 2008. The margin of accuracy for a sample of 1,000 respondents is 3.1 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. At the request of the client an oversampling strategy was implemented in the province of Quebec.

A total of 501 interviews were conducted with employed adults in the Quebec. The accuracy of the oversample of 501 employed Quebecers is 4.4 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20. Results in Quebec were weighted down in the national sample so that the reported number of interviews reflected the true proportion of employed individuals in the province vis-à-vis the rest of the country. Margins of accuracy may be wider for sub-populations detailed in this report and percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Table 1.0
Quota Distribution
Survey of Employed Canadians

Region	Quota	Margin of Accuracy
Atlantic	65	±12.4
Quebec*	501	±4.4
Ontario	391	±5.0
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	65	±12.4
Alberta	116	±9.2
British Columbia	135	±8.6
Total	1,000	±3.1

**Note: see methodological note above*

The random sample was created by cross-correlating the postal codes with a non-proprietary database of telephone numbers. Within the sampling universe, potential respondents were randomly selected to participate in the study. All selected members of the sampling universe who were not available were called back five (5) times and only individuals who were employed were eligible to participate in the study

Ten percent of the fieldwork was monitored as part of the firm's quality and data integrity procedures. Validation and testing of key demographic cohorts indicate that the sample profiles were representative of the populations within acceptable margins of statistical accuracy.



Readers should note that the statistics from the 2003 Leger Study have been incorporated for comparison purposes. Where comparative questions were asked, the wording is detailed.

This report includes an executive summary and an analysis of the survey findings. This research project was completed in accordance with the standards of and registered with the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association of which Nanos is a Corporate Gold Seal Member.

The logo for Nanos, featuring the word "Nanos" in a blue, cursive script font.

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2.0 Executive Summary

Nanos Research's survey of 1,000 employed Canadians revealed that more than eight in ten respondents worked full time. Overall, one quarter of the employed Canadians surveyed were unionized (six percent less than the preceding research conducted five years ago in 2003). Of those who did not hold a union job nearly eight in ten were not interested in being unionized. Three in four respondents with a unionized job believed their Membership in the union was mandatory and that they were unable to resign their position without losing their job. Virtually all respondents (88%) agreed a secret ballot should be required when forming or removing a union from the workplace. To follow are the key highlights of the research.

- ⊕ **Eight in ten employed full time.** Consistent with the research conducted in 2003 more than eight in ten (84%) survey participants were employed full time compared to 16% employed part time. In the current research, men (87%) were comparatively more likely to be employed full time than women (80%).
- ⊕ **Most Canadians employed in non-unionized job.** Seventy four percent of employed Canadians currently held a non-unionized job, an increase of six percent since the 2003 research was conducted. Only one quarter (26%) were currently employed in a unionized position. Respondents in Quebec (36%) were twice as likely as those in Alberta (16%) to be unionized.
- ⊕ **Little interest in being unionized.** When non-unionized working Canadians were asked for their level of interest in being unionized at their current job nearly eight in ten (77%) were either somewhat not interested (6%) or not at all interested (71%). Although still a minority opinion, Atlantic Canadians were comparatively more likely to prefer their current job be unionized compared to the survey average (20% very/somewhat interested), as were younger Canadians (+15 amongst 18 to 24 year olds).

Current/Formerly Unionized Canadians

- ⊕ **Perception of union Membership status.** Prompted with a full definition of union Membership more than eight in ten (85%) of those who have held a union job believed they were an actual Member of the union. Thirteen percent believed they were not actual Members of a union. Regionally, respondents in Quebec and Manitoba/Saskatchewan were marginally less likely to believe they fit the criteria for actual union Membership (79% and 75% respectively) compared to respondents in other parts of Canada.
- ⊕ **Union Membership compulsory.** Three in four of those who held a union job stated they could not resign their union Membership while keeping their unionized job. Only fifteen percent believed they could resign from the union without jeopardizing their employment. Albertans (25%) were most likely to believe they could resign their union Membership and still keep their job. Probed for why they became a union Member 90% indicated Membership was required and came with the job.
- ⊕ **Unions bring fair treatment.** Formerly unionized employees (24%) were half as likely as currently unionized employees (44%) to believe a union in the workplace was required to ensure equitable treatment by management. Seven in ten unionized respondents believed the presence of a union in their workplace was an important factor in their receiving fair treatment from their employer. One quarter believed their union was not important to receiving fair treatment at work.
- ⊕ **Union dues well spent.** Formerly unionized workers (36%) were more likely to believe their dues were not well spent compared to current union workers (27%). Sixty percent of current/former unionized employees believed their dues were well spent by their union, while a significant three of every ten (30%) current and former unionized employees believed their dues were not well spent.
- ⊕ **Unionized workers would prefer to remain unionized.** A significant cleavage is evident in the opinions of current versus former union workers. While 70% of current union workers preferred their jobs remain unionized only 52% of



former union workers preferred their former unionized job remain unionized. Notably, more than one quarter (27%) of currently unionized respondents stated that if given the choice they would prefer not to be unionized. Two thirds of current/former union workers preferred their current/former union job remained unionized; twice the number of those who preferred their job was not unionized.

Job Satisfaction

- ⊕ **Job satisfaction levels remain very high.** Overall, more than nine in ten (92%) of employed Canadians were very/somewhat satisfied with their current job. Overall job satisfaction levels were unchanged from 2003 levels although in the current research employees were more likely to be very satisfied with their job (60%) than they were in 2003 (53%). However, currently unionized respondents were less likely to be very satisfied (54%) with their jobs than the never unionized (61%) and formerly unionized (66%).
- ⊕ **Canadians satisfied with management.** Almost nine in ten (88%) of employed Canadians were very/somewhat satisfied with their relationship with management at work. Fewer than one in ten (9%) were somewhat/very dissatisfied. A significant variance was evident in the opinions of current versus former/never unionized respondents interviewed. While more than six in ten former union (65%) and never-unionized (61%) employees described themselves as 'very satisfied' with their relationship with management at work only four in ten (43%) current union workers held the same opinion. This could be indicative of the traditionally antagonistic nature of the union/management relationship in the Canadian labour relations scheme.
- ⊕ **Job security levels high.** Nearly nine in ten (87%) of respondents were very/somewhat satisfied with their job security compared to 10% who were somewhat/very dissatisfied. Overall satisfaction with job security has increased by six points since the previous wave of research in 2003 (81% very/somewhat satisfied). Results for never, current and formerly unionized respondents were consistent with the survey average.
- ⊕ **Satisfaction with union relationship strong.** Seven in ten current/former union workers were very/somewhat satisfied with their relationship with their union with the highest satisfaction levels observed among respondents in British Columbia (81%) and Atlantic Canada (72%). Three in four (76%) respondents were very/somewhat satisfied with the representation they received from their union.

Economic Impact

- ⊕ **Small businesses the key to economic health.** Of the four groups tested respondents were most likely to believe small businesses brought the greatest contribution to Canada's prosperity and economic well being (91% very/somewhat positive). Although still a comfortable majority, Quebecers were comparatively less likely to believe small businesses were key contributors to our prosperity (-19) compared to Canadians in other regions of the country.
- ⊕ **Large businesses strong contributors to economic health.** Eight in ten employed Canadians (80%) stated large businesses made a very/somewhat positive contribution to Canada's prosperity, unchanged from 2003 observations (79% very/somewhat positive). Regional analysis indicated that respondents in Ontario (84%) and Alberta (82%) were most likely to believe large businesses made a positive contribution to Canada's economic well-being.
- ⊕ **Government a positive driver.** Seven in ten (69%) employed Canadians thought governments made a very/somewhat positive contribution to the nations prosperity and economic well being, up ten points from the 2003 wave of research. Notably, respondents were nearly three times more likely, in the current research, to believe governments made a very positive contribution (20%) compared to five years ago (8% very positive contribution).
- ⊕ **Union contribution positive.** Six in ten (63%) respondents believed unions make a very/somewhat positive contribution Canada's prosperity, with the change from 2003 being within the margin of accuracy for the research (+2).



Union Impact

- ⊕ **Unions losing their relevance.** Over the past five years, the number of employed Canadians who believe unions are no longer necessary has increased by eight percent and is now tied, in percentage terms, with the view that unions are still as relevant today as they have ever been. In the current research 46% of survey respondents stated unions were needed and relevant at one time but today they were no longer necessary, on par with the incidence of those who believed unions were still as relevant today as they have ever been (47%).
- ⊕ **Canadians split on impact unions have on competitiveness.** Respondents were equally divided on the net effect unions had on the ability of a business to compete. Currently, 46% believed unions had a very/somewhat positive effect on business competitiveness, identical to the number who believed they had a somewhat/very negative effect.
- ⊕ **Unions bring job security.** More than eight in ten (82%) believed the presence of a union enhanced job security for employees in the workplace. Young Canadians were nearly three times more likely to be of this opinion compared to older respondents.
- ⊕ **Opinions on union impact on innovation split.** Fifty three percent of respondents agreed the presence of a union in the workplace promoted innovation while 40% disagreed.
- ⊕ **High oil prices responsible for layoffs.** Asked, one third (33%) of respondents believed recent layoffs in the auto sector were the result of the high price of oil with a further 25% indicating the layoffs were the result of the manufacture of vehicles which were not in demand. Eighteen percent of employed Canadians blamed high labour costs with an additional 16% blaming poor management decisions.

Unions in the workplace

- ⊕ **Secret ballots a must.** Working Canadians continue to believe a secret ballot should be required when forming or removing a union from a workplace with nine in ten (88%) completely/somewhat agreeing; unchanged from 2003 observations.
- ⊕ **Employees entitled to information from both sides.** More than nine in ten (93%) working Canadians completely/somewhat agreed that during a union organizing drive employees should be entitled to obtain information from both the union and employer on the impact of a union in the workplace.
- ⊕ **Full union Membership should not be mandatory.** Asked if it should be a condition of employment that all employees of a workplace that is or becomes unionized should become full Members of the union 52% completely/somewhat agreed. Forty five percent somewhat/completely disagreed with this statement.
- ⊕ **Employees should have the right to choose their representation.** Ninety percent of Canadians completely/somewhat agreed employees should have a choice as to which union represented them to only seven percent who disagreed.
- ⊕ **Canadians oppose discrimination against non-union companies/employees.** By a nearly four to one margin respondents disagreed that governments should be permitted to restrict public contracts to unionized companies/employees only. Seventy five percent somewhat/completely disagreed with this statement compared to 20% who completely/somewhat agreed.
- ⊕ **Unions must disclose spending of union dues.** Almost four of five working Canadians (78%) of Canadians somewhat/completely disagreed with the statement 'unions should not be required to publicly disclose how they spend the union dues they collect from unionized workers'. Only 19% completely/somewhat agreed with the statement.
- ⊕ **Canadians believe Membership is mandatory at a unionized workplace.** Sixty five percent of respondents believed if they were employed at a unionized workplace it would be mandatory to become a union Member, more than twice the number who believed they would have the choice as to whether or not to join the union (30%). Quebecers were the most



likely to believe union Membership would be voluntary at 39% overall, nearly twice the observations made among respondents from BC (22% would have a choice).

Unions in Canada and the World

- ⊕ **Canada and the European Union.** Forty seven percent of respondents considered it very/somewhat important that Canada have similar rules related to unions as the European Union. Thirty percent considered this association somewhat/very unimportant while a further 23% were unsure.
- ⊕ **Canada and the United States.** One half (52%) of respondents considered it very/somewhat important that rules on unions be consistent between Canada and the US. Twenty seven percent considered this somewhat/very unimportant with a further 19% unsure. Ontarians were more likely to consider this comparability important than other regions of the country.
- ⊕ **Canada and Australian/New Zealand.** Forty two percent of working Canadians considered it very/somewhat important that Canada's rules on unions be consistent with rules in Australia and New Zealand. One third (32%) believe this to be somewhat/very unimportant with 25% unsure.
- ⊕ **Canada and the United Nations.** Almost half (47%) of working Canadians believed it to be very/somewhat important that Canada and the Member countries of the United Nations share similar rules on unions. Three in ten (30%) indicated this was somewhat/very unimportant while another 22% were unsure.
- ⊕ **Canadians prefer non mandatory union Membership.** Six in ten (58%) have a very/somewhat positive impression of the rules in the United States, Europe, Australia and New Zealand which ban mandatory union Membership; more than twice the level of those with a somewhat/very negative impression of this approach (24%).
- ⊕ **Employees should have the option to pay lower union dues.** Over half (54%) of respondents had a very/somewhat positive impression of the approach which allowed a unionized employee who declined union Membership to pay lower dues to cover the costs of collective bargaining but not be forced to pay the additional dues that could be used for non-bargaining purposes such as supporting and opposing specific political parties, politicians, social causes, etc. Positive impressions of this approach were highest among respondents in Quebec at more than six in ten overall (63% very/somewhat positive impression).

Federal Civil Service Labour Code

- ⊕ **Most Canadians unaware union Membership is not mandatory for Federal government employees.** Nine out of ten working Canadians (88%) were unaware that the Federal civil service Labour Code does not allow unions and employers to force union Membership as a condition of employment. Only twelve percent of respondents were aware of this.
- ⊕ **Impression of Federal civil service Labour Code strong.** Nearly six in ten (57%) working Canadians had a very/somewhat positive impression of the employment rights afforded to government of Canada employees by the Federal Civil Service Labour Code. Only one third (33%) had a somewhat/very negative impression of this approach.

Union dues administration

- ⊕ **Canadians oppose contributing union dues to political parties.** Eight in ten (81%) working Canadians somewhat/completely disagreed that union dues should be used to make contributions to political parties. Only sixteen percent completely/somewhat agreed this was an acceptable practice. Respondents in Quebec were most likely to oppose using union dues for political contributions (87% somewhat/completely disagree).
- ⊕ **Contributing to advocacy groups outside the workplace unacceptable.** More than seven in ten working Canadians (72%) somewhat/completely disagreed with using union dues to make contributions to advocacy groups unrelated to workplace needs, three times the number who completely/somewhat agreed.



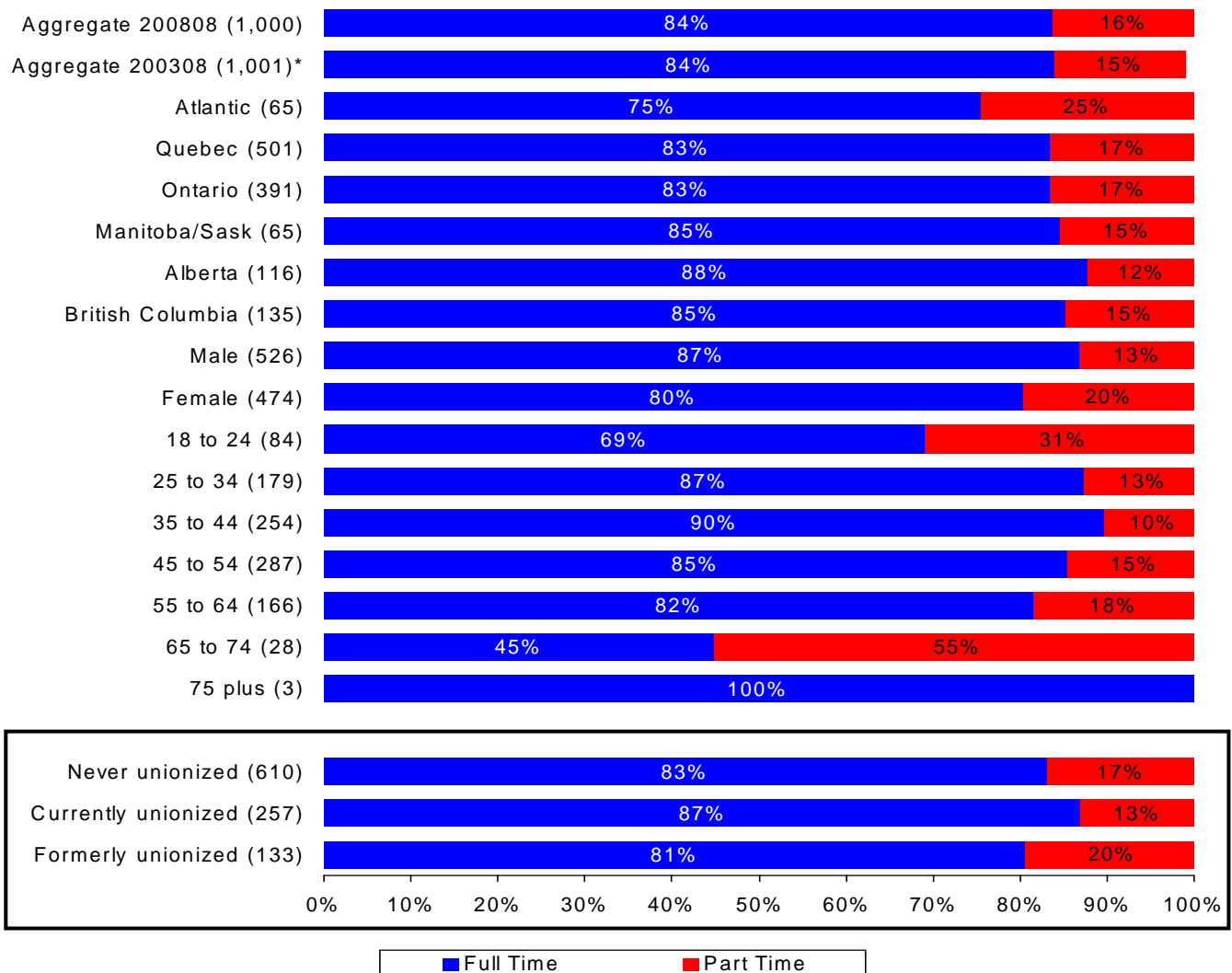
- ⊕ **Union dues should not be partisan.** Eight in ten (80%) respondents somewhat/completely disagreed union dues should be used to support advertising campaigns that opposed a specific political party. By contrast, only 17% completely/somewhat agreed with this proposition.
- ⊕ **Spending of union dues.** Asked what percentage of union dues should go towards providing information resources and legal support to form or preserve a union half of respondents stated the threshold should be 20% or less.



3.0 Work Situation

Consistent with the research conducted in 2003 more than eight in ten (84%) survey participants were employed full time at the time of survey compared to 16% who were employed part time. Levels of full time employment were comparatively higher in Western Canada with Alberta recording the highest level of full time employment at 88% overall. Analysis of the demographic cohorts indicated that men (87%) were notably more likely to be employed full time compared to women (80% full time) with full time employment levels highest among respondents between 25 and 44 years of age.

Which of the following best describes your work situation? (Source: Nanos Research, August 2008)



* 2003 Study Question - Do you work part-time or full-time?



