

15 December 2024

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Steven MacKinnon, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Labour
Steven.MacKinnon@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P.
Minister Responsible for Canada Post
jean-yves.duclos@parl.gc.ca

Ginette Brazeau, Chairperson
Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB)
ginette.brazeau@cirb-ccri.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister, Ministers and Madame Chairperson:

RE: Alberta unions speak in one voice to Trudeau: use the postal strike to show you're on the side of Canadian workers, not those who would crush the middle class

We, the undersigned Alberta unions leaders, are writing to all of you with a number of urgent demands related to the strike by 55,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) against Canada Post.

Our first demand is for Federal Labour Minister, Steve MacKinnon. In recent comments to the House of Commons, you acknowledged that all Canadian workers have a constitutionally-protected right to strike. But then you went on to suggest that four weeks is enough. So, which is it? Do workers have the right to strike or not? With due respect, you may be a Minister of the Crown, but that does NOT entitle you to put a time limit or an expiry date on the rights of Canadians.

You also said you had to act because the strike had become "too disruptive". Again, with due respect, strikes are SUPPOSED to be disruptive. That's literally the point. If strikes were not disruptive, workers would have no leverage, and without leverage, all the bargaining power would be with employers, not workers. That's a recipe for a race to the bottom in terms of wages and working conditions. This would be bad news for both the vast majority of Canadians who work for a living AND the Canadian economy as a whole.

With all of this in mind, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to withdraw your recent letter to the Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) and allow the strike at Canada Post to proceed until a negotiated settlement is reached.

Our second demand is for CIRB Chairperson Ginette Brazeau. You have been asked by Minister MacKinnon to determine whether an impasse has been reached between the parties and whether it is the opinion of the Board that the parties are too far apart to ever reach a negotiated agreement. As leaders who represent literally hundreds of thousands of workers in Alberta, we urge you to tread very carefully on this issue.

If you rule there is no hope for a negotiated settlement, you will be setting a very dangerous precedent. Specifically, you will be sending a message to all employers in federally-regulated sectors – and, by extension, employers in provincially-regulated sectors, as well – that all they must do to get a government-imposed settlement is stall negotiations for a few weeks during a strike or lockout.

In this case, giving Minister MacKinnon what he clearly wants could have the effect of exporting the poisonous labour-management culture that exists at Canada Post to other employers, thereby making a mockery of the collective bargaining process across the country.

With all of this in mind, we urge you to tell Minister MacKinnon there is still hope for a negotiated settlement and the parties should get back to the bargaining table. Don't reward Canada Post (yet again) for their noxious strategy of non-negotiation!

Our third demand is for Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister Responsible for Canada Post. Minister Duclos, we don't have to remind you that Canada Post is a Crown Corporation, wholly owned by the citizens of Canada. We also don't have to remind you, as the minister responsible for Canada Post, you have the authority to set the general policy direction for the Corporation and hire and fire board members.

With this letter, we urge you to use those powers to help the parties reach a negotiated settlement in the current contract dispute with Canada Post. It is our assessment the Board and management at Canada Post have embraced both a labour relations strategy and a vision for the future of Canada that are at odds with the values and priorities of your government and the values and priorities of the majority of Canadians, especially working people.

Specifically, it's clear to us both the Board and senior management have a deeply engrained disrespect for the collective bargaining process. It is also clear to us that many and perhaps most senior managers and Board members at Canada Post have accepted the notion the corporation doesn't really have a future as a public entity. One of the only ways forward is

to turn decent jobs at Canada Post into precarious, low-paid jobs, akin to the jobs at modern-day sweatshops such as Amazon.

We believe both labour relations at Canada Post and the very future of the corporation are imperiled by the defeatist culture that has clearly taken root among senior managers and Board members. With that in mind, we demand you use your power as minister responsible for Canada Post to fire some or all of the Board members AND set an explicit policy that Canada Post will NOT adopt the race-to-the-bottom human resources policies of companies such as Amazon. From our perspective, firing a few of the Board members who are cheerleading privatization and the "Amazonification" of work will help bring a quick end to the current dispute.

Our final message is for Prime Minister Trudeau. Prime Minister, we acknowledge that despite all the hatred directed at you from many people in our province, your government has often been a good friend to working Canadians. The gains you delivered for working families under the Supply and Confidence Agreement negotiated with the federal NDP have been truly impressive. The list of noteworthy accomplishments is long and includes the following:

- The new national childcare plan (which, not incidentally, has its roots in the maternity benefits first negotiated by CUPW);
- The new national dental and pharmacare plans; and
- The new national ban on the use of scabs during strikes and lockouts in federally-regulated sectors.

Along with our counterparts from across the country, we have worked closely with you and your ministers to help win these victories. We give you and your government credit where credit is due.

However, in the context of the current postal strike, we have questions for you. They are questions that have implications far beyond Canada Post. And, they are questions we will be asking of all political leaders, especially those who hope to win the support of workers. Here they are: do you really want to a race-to-the-bottom, "Amazon-style" labour market in Canada? If not, what are you willing to do to stop it?

We think the Canada Post strike represents an opportunity for you and your government to demonstrate clearly that you understand what's happening with the increased "gigification" of work in Canada, especially for young people.

Further, we think the strike presents an opportunity for you and your government to draw a line in the sand against an “Amazon-style” economy and demonstrate that you’re on the side of ordinary working Canadians, not billionaires and corporations.

You can seize that opportunity by directing Minister MacKinnon to withdraw his letter; by encouraging the CIRB to send the parties back to the bargaining table; and by working with Minister Duclos to fire some members of the Canada Post Board and replace them with people with new marching orders.

Please accept these suggestions in the spirit they were intended – to help end the current strike with a negotiated settlement and to help defend the long-term best interests of all Canadian workers.

Sincerely,

Gil McGowan, President
Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL)

Cori Longo, Secretary Treasurer
Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL)

Guy Smith, President
Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE)

Rory Gill, President
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Alberta Division

Heather Smith, President
United Nurses of Alberta (UNA)

Tom Hesse, President
United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 401 (UFCW)

Jason Schilling, President
Alberta Teachers Association (ATA)

Mike Parker, President
Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)

Leanne Alfaro, Vice-President
Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)

Terry Parker, Executive Director
Building Trades of Alberta (BTA)

Marianne Hladun, Regional Executive VP
Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), Prairie Region

Krysty Thomas, Prairies VP
Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), Prairie Region

Sabino Spagnuolo, Prairies VP
Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), Prairie Region

Steve Bradshaw, President
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 569 (Edmonton)

Mike Mahar, President
ATU Local 583 (Calgary)

Damian Petti, International Vice-President
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)

Quinn Benders, President
Non-Academic Staff Association (University of Alberta)

Steve Kerrigan, Alberta Director
Unifor

Carolyn Krahn
Canadian Union of Office Professionals (COPE), Local 397

Matt Wade, President
Teamsters Rail Division (Alberta)

Kyle Franzen, Directing Business Representative
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) District 14

cc: Jan Simpson, President
Canadian Union of Postal Employees (CUPW)
jsimpson@cupw-sttp.org

Bea Bruske, President
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
president-office@clctc.ca

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca

Heather McPherson, Member of Parliament
Edmonton Strathcona
heather.mcpherson@parl.gc.ca

Blake Desjarlais, Member of Parliament
Edmonton Griesbach
blake.desjarlais@parl.gc.ca

Randy Boissonnault, Member of Parliament
Edmonton Centre
randy.boissonnault@parl.gc.ca

George Chahal, Member of Parliament
Calgary Skyview
George.chahal@parl.gc.ca