

March 23, 2015

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

We are writing to you today on behalf of 630,000 members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) to register our strong opposition to Bill C-51, the *Anti-Terrorism Act*. As Canada's largest union, we are deeply concerned that under the guise of disrupting amorphous "threats" to the security of Canada, the legislative changes contained within Bill C-51 threaten freedom of speech, protection of privacy, and the rights of habeas corpus in Canada.

While promoting these very drastic changes to the criminal justice system, law enforcement, and intelligence gathering services, your government has not produced any evidence or justification that these measures will in fact make Canada any safer from the threat of terrorist attack.

Public safety cannot be secured by threatening the civil liberties that ensure a healthy democracy.

As you are well aware, CUPE is not alone in criticizing this Bill; Bill C-51 has been criticized by Jean Chrétien, Joe Clark, John Turner, and Paul Martin, as well as five former Supreme Court of Canada justices, the Privacy Commissioner, and the many legal experts who have so far appeared at the Public Safety Committee. Legal and legislative experts on Canadian national security such as Craig Forcese, Kent Roach, Nader Hasan, and Clayton Ruby have identified many serious problems with Bill C-51. For your convenience, their analyses are found at:

- <https://cdnantiterrorismawordpress.com>
- <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/bill-c-51-legal-primer>.

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Much of the criticism that Bill C-51 has received has focussed on the lack of increased oversight over CSIS to balance the increase in the agency's powers. The new powers to be given to CSIS through this Bill fundamentally change its mandate and mires the collection of intelligence with law enforcement; the very necessary separation that CSIS was created to ensure in the first place.

Further, there is reason to be concerned that provisions within Bill C-51 would allow many groups exercising their right to democratic dissent, including the union movement, but also Aboriginal rights groups and environmental activists, to be targeted by CSIS. Canada's legal system is built on the foundation that there is a clear separation between the political system and law enforcement. Politicizing intelligence gathering and law enforcement, combined with the criminalization of certain types of free speech, all contained within Bill C-51, not only threaten freedom and democracy, they have the potential to make Canada a very scary place.

In addition to our concerns about the contents of Bill C-51, we are also dismayed at the speed with which this legislation is being rushed through Parliament. This is a complex, yet ambiguous, piece of legislation. It should be subjected to proper legal scrutiny. It is deplorable that the unprecedented expansion in police and surveillance powers, the threats to free speech, and the violation of Charter Rights all contained within this Bill be rushed through Parliament. It demonstrates not just contempt for our parliamentary democracy, but contempt for the people of Canada.

Canadians expect their government to commit to building a Canada that is safer and stronger. We believe that the government should be protecting the democracy we are trying to keep safe and working to unite all the people of Canada, rather than pitting us against one another. Heeding that call – from us and so many other Canadians – would mean that your government would put aside Bill C-51 and bring in legislation that truly improves public safety. We urge you to do so.

Yours truly,



PAUL MOIST  
National President



CHARLES FLEURY  
National Secretary-Treasurer

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cc: National Executive Board members; H. Yussuff; T. Mulcair; J. Trudeau