

May 24, 2012

The Honourable Lisa Raitt
Minister of Labour
House of Commons
OTTAWA, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

On behalf of 618,000 members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, I write again today to register our deep anger and disappointment with you and your government for interfering in the rights of workers to free collective bargaining. Just 10 hours after the strike began at Canadian Pacific, you have placed back-to-work legislation on the order paper at the House of Commons.

This kind of interference in collective bargaining at Canadian Pacific, a private company, continues to signal to the business community that this government is squarely on the side of the employer. Your government has repeatedly failed to remain neutral during industrial disputes and to respect free collective bargaining.

The labour relations regime in Canada has been achieved through decades of jurisprudence and negotiations between thousands of unions and employers; your government's willingness to repeatedly toss this aside in order to force workers to accept terms that they do not freely negotiate is causing a fundamental shift in the carefully balanced system that Canadians have relied on for decades. The right to strike is fundamental to free collective bargaining, a system in which working people work together to improve their economic condition and thereby improve the Canadian economy. Your willingness to introduce back-to-work legislation, as you have done in the last few months with employees in multiple bargaining units at Air Canada and with workers at Canada Post, takes away the fundamental right of free collective bargaining from working people and signals to all working Canadians you are fully against them.

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These decisions, while seemingly appealing to business interests and to your government in the short-term, will have far-reaching and long-term implications for a mature federal labour relations system which has demonstrated over time its value to both workers and employers. A negotiated settlement is far preferable to one which is imposed by a government appointed third party arbitrator; your actions remove any incentive Canadian Pacific might have to reach such an agreement.

Today I call on you to abandon this legislation and instead to respect the rights of the 4,800 Teamsters members at Canadian Pacific to freely negotiate an acceptable collective agreement.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Moist". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "P" and a stylized "M".

PAUL MOIST
National President
Canadian Union of Public Employees