

COALITION OF BC BUSINESSES

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August 14, 2009

Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

RE: Bill C-386, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code
(replacement workers)

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

The Coalition of BC Businesses strongly urges Parliament not to support a Private Members Bill that would prevent federally regulated employers from hiring temporary replacement workers during work stoppages.

On April 29, 2009, a Private Members Bill supporting a ban on replacement workers was defeated in the House of Commons. Shortly after, on May 14th, Private Members Bill C-386 was introduced by Bloc MP, Mario Laframboise. Bill 386, which is likely to be debated during the next sitting of the House, also seeks to prevent federally regulated employers from using replacement workers during labour disruptions.

The House has spoken on numerous occasions opposing anti-replacement worker bills. We are encouraged that the Government of Canada has not supported these bills in recent years and hope that all Parliamentarians will defeat this latest bill as well, particularly considering the challenging economic times employers are facing today.

We are concerned that the passage of the bill would risk the delivery of services to Canadians, harm the national economy and have a devastating impact on small and medium-sized businesses that are dependent on federal industries in transportation, financial services and telecommunications.

Member Associations
Alliance of Beverage Licensees BC
BC Hotel Association
BC Chamber of Commerce
BC Real Estate Association
BC Restaurant and Foodservices Association
Building Owners & Managers Association
Building Supply Dealers Association
Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
Canadian Home Builders' Association – BC
Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association
Independent Contractors & Businesses Association
Insurance Brokers Association of BC
New Car Dealers Association of BC
Retail Council of Canada
Retail BC
Western Convenience Stores Association
Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association

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Granting organized labour the ability to shut down federally regulated businesses would have a ripple affect across the country and harm many businesses that are already under considerable financial stress.

Small and medium-sized businesses depend on airlines, airports and railways to ensure seamless and timely delivery of goods. They also rely on telecommunications companies for their telephone, fax and email communications. Any interruption of these services could have a crippling affect on employers, including home-based businesses. Furthermore, the financial services sector that process millions of payment transactions every day would be vulnerable to a work stoppage leaving thousands of employers and employees in the lurch.

The experience of B.C.'s ban on replacement workers strongly suggests that Bill C-386 would negatively affect employees, employers and Canadians at large. Past work stoppages, in many cases, are protracted over extended periods of time, as striking employees are under less pressure to quickly settle terms with the employer, as illustrated by the 2007 Vancouver garbage strike that lasted three months. Furthermore, the B.C. law is unfair to employers who are prohibited from hiring temporary replacement workers, whilst striking employees are free to find other work.

The Coalition of BC Businesses supports labour policies that will help foster a positive working relationship between employers and employees and a climate for economic growth and jobs. The Coalition is made up of business associations representing over 50,000 small and medium-sized business employers active in all sectors of B.C.'s diverse economy in communities throughout the province.

Thank you for reviewing this matter.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Winter', with a horizontal line underneath.

John Winter
Chair, Coalition of BC Businesses

CC:

Hon. Rona Ambrose, Minister of Labour

Hon. Stockwell Day, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway