

# COALITION OF BC BUSINESSES

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September 22, 2003

Hon. Graham Bruce  
Minister of Skills Development and Labour  
PO Box 9052, Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Bruce

I am writing on behalf of the Coalition of BC Businesses to bring to your attention a recently published poll on Canadian attitudes on workplace issues. The poll was commissioned by the Canadian LabourWatch Association and conducted by Leger Marketing. You may be aware that the results were highlighted on Global National News and in a recent series of articles in the National Post, which we have included.

In BC, as in the rest of Canada, small business is the fastest growing sector in the Canadian economy. This is recognized by Canadians as 96% of the 1,000 working Canadians polled identified small business as the primary engine of Canadian economic growth, ranking it ahead of large business, government and unions as contributors to Canada's well-being and prosperity. It is with this evolving labour environment in mind that the government must introduce labour legislation that will encourage rather than hinder investment and growth in British Columbia.

There were a number of findings in the poll that indicate strong public support for changes in our labour legislation. These changes have long been advocated by the Coalition and are required if the full potential of the small business community is to be realized.

Currently, when employees wish to de-certify or withdraw from a union they have few resources to assist them to overcome the bureaucratic and legalistic roadblocks that confront them. The union currently representing them is not going to assist them with de-certification. The employer is prohibited from doing so. The employees are left to fend for themselves and their true wishes regarding union representation can go unheeded, leaving the small business with a disaffected workforce. On this particular issue the poll found that:

- 93% of all respondents agreed that employees should have a choice as to which union represents them or not.

- 85% of all respondents agreed that the process to introduce a union in a workplace should be the same as the process to eliminate it from a workplace.
- 76% of all respondents agreed that information, resources and legal aid should be made available to employees who are trying to remove or resist the formation of a union. (78% felt these same resources should be available to employees wishing to form union)

While the Coalition is not advocating legal aid for labour relations matters, it does support employers providing assistance for legal representation. This would make the process of certification (financed by the union) the same as de-certification.

On the issue of unfair labour practices, the Coalition maintains unions do not face the same penalties or sanctions for using threats, coercion or intimidation during a certification or de-certification drive as an employer would for similar behaviour. An overwhelming proportion of both unionized and non-unionized working Canadians believe the process of certification and de-certification should be the same, including the treatment of improper behaviour of employers and unions. The poll found that:

- 87% of all respondents agreed that if employers or unions behave improperly towards employees during a union organizing drive or during a campaign to remove a union from a workplace, both employers and unions should be penalized equally.
- 91% of all respondents agreed that during a union organizing process/drive, employers should be allowed to communicate the potential impact of a union on the employer to their employees.
- 96% of all respondents agreed that unions and employers should be accountable for all promises and statements made to employees during an organizing campaign.

The Coalition is disappointed the government has not taken the steps necessary to update its labour legislation. Changes are long overdue and supported by the public. Until the government acts to correct the deficiencies in our labour policies, the small business community will be unable to do all it can to bring prosperity to our province. Time is of the essence and government must get on with the task.

Yours truly,



Philip Hochstein  
Chair

Cc: Lee Doney  
Richard Longpre