

55,000 Canada Post workers set to strike Friday morning, but CUPW has no plan to beat back government-management onslaught

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We encourage all Canada Post workers to participate in building the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee and to sign up for the WSWS Postal Workers Newsletter by filling out the form at the end of this article or emailing canadapostworkersfc@gmail.com.

Over 55,000 Canada Post workers are poised to launch a strike on Friday morning, May 23, in opposition to a management-government onslaught aimed at eviscerating their wages, working conditions, and fundamental rights, including the right to strike.

Under pressure from the rank and file, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) was forced to issue a 72-hour strike notice on Monday. The legal ban on strike action—dictated by the former-Trudeau Liberal government when it criminalized the last strike in December—expires Thursday, May 22. This sets the stage for a renewed confrontation between postal workers and a ruling class gang-up of Canada Post management, an even more openly right-wing Liberal government under the former central banker Mark Carney, and the saboteurs in the CUPW bureaucracy.

A walkout would mark the resumption of a struggle that began in earnest last November, when postal workers walked off the job nationwide in opposition to management's intransigent demands for "profitability"—a euphemism for mass layoffs, speedups, wage cuts and the gutting of workplace protections. After just over four weeks on strike, CUPW surrendered to the strike ban dictated by then-Labour Minister Steve MacKinnon, despite massive rank and file support for defiance.

However, no sooner did CUPW issue its strike notice, than union negotiators were holding out the possibility of a climb-down, with lead negotiator Jim Gallant repeatedly declaring that the union would put off any strike action by two weeks in order to review any new offer from Canada Post management delivered before the 12:01 a.m. Friday deadline.

On cue, an offer was tabled by Canada Post management on Wednesday that is a slap in the face to postal workers. Management at the same time rejected the proposed two-week truce, instead aiming for an immediate frontal confrontation with postal workers. They know that CUPW will work dutifully to subordinate workers to the rigged collective bargaining system, including any new interpretation of the Canada Labour Code the government may devise. Last year, it repeatedly invoked Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code to shut down strikes without even

the democratic fig leaf of back-to-work legislation, including by dockworkers and railroaders, as well as the postal workers.

The proposed contract would expand delivery operations to seven days a week by utilizing an army of part-time workers—which the company promises would have limited health and pension benefits—and begin the implementation of "dynamic routing," which would see delivery workers' routes change from day to day in the name of "efficiency." Both demands, backed by the Industrial Inquiry Commission report issued last week, would result in the gutting of the Canada Post workforce, in particular full-time workers.

The latest offer also includes a miserly wage offer of just 13.59 percent compounded over four years—with 6 percent in the first year, 3 percent in the second and just 2 percent in years three and four. This would leave workers even further behind, after years of surging inflation that has made making ends meet increasingly impossible for the vast majority of working people. The cost of food and other essential goods is continuing to rise dramatically amid the trade war between Ottawa and Washington.

Canada Post can act so aggressively because it knows that it enjoys the full backing of corporate Canada. They all want to make an example of postal workers—traditionally one of the most militant sections of the working class—so they can launch similar attacks on all public services and all workers. Their goals are to slash social spending and intensify worker exploitation to further enrich the wealthy and boost the military budget to wage imperialist war. Postal workers can and must appeal to the widespread opposition among all workers to this class-war agenda.

While CUPW claims it would need time to consider Canada Post's insulting offer, it is clear that it must be decisively rejected by the rank and file. The basis to do this is by broadening the struggle to other sections of workers, a task that can only be carried out if Canada Post workers take control of their fight from the union bureaucracy.

The union helped legitimize the anti-worker conspiracy between the federal government and Canada Post management by backing the Industrial Inquiry Commission established by MacKinnon and overseen by seasoned federal arbitrator William Kaplan for the purpose of rubber-stamping management's demands. Canada Post is pushing for the "Amazonification" of Canada Post's workforce, and intensified exploitation, including through the deployment of

artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies.

CUPW President Jan Simpson declared that the clearly rigged commission would provide for “critical discussions about the future of Canada Post and the issues that matter to all of us.” However the voices and opinions of workers went entirely unheeded.

The report authored by Kaplan unambiguously backs management’s position. It recommends seven-day delivery operations, the expansion of part-time workers, the phase-out of door-to-door delivery in favour of community mailboxes and the lifting of a moratorium on the closure of rural post offices. Kaplan’s report also calls for the implementation of dynamic routing in order to cut down on overtime pay and “trapped time,” the right of workers to a full day’s pay after finishing their route.

This outcome only underscores what was obvious from the outset: that the IIC was established by the Liberal government as a tool to legitimize sweeping attacks on postal workers and to bolster the position of corporate executives at the Crown corporation whose overriding mission is to turn Canada Post into a profit-generating machine. Canada Post has declared that these sweeping changes are necessary after nearly \$3 billion in losses since 2018 amid declining letter mail and competition from private couriers for the delivery of parcels.

Kaplan’s report complains that, “Bargaining largely failed because one party —CUPW—is defending business as usual, and wants to improve on the status quo with, for example, further job security enhancements and even better than best-in-class total compensation and terms and conditions of employment,” placing the onus on workers to accept a dramatic decline in working conditions and living standards so Canada Post can pile up profits off their backs.

Postal workers confront not merely a conflict with Canada Post executives, but a full-fledged conspiracy uniting management, the federal and provincial governments, and the trade union bureaucracy. The Liberals, with the backing of the Conservatives and union-backed New Democrats alike, have consistently moved to criminalize workers’ resistance.

At the provincial level, the Quebec government of right-wing CAQ Premier François Legault is following in Ottawa’s footsteps, preparing its own legislative offensive to curtail the right to strike, reinforcing the message that the ruling class across Canada is united in its drive to dismantle workers’ rights. This anti-democratic agenda reflects the broader strategy of the capitalist class, which sees in artificial intelligence and automation an opportunity to drastically restructure labor relations, increase exploitation, and eliminate secure employment altogether.

Postal workers are in the fight of their lives. What they are confronting is not just the immediate assault by Canada Post management, but the transformation of the entire global logistics and delivery sector into a ruthless regime of surveillance, precarious employment and speedup.

Their fight to preserve decent jobs and defend the right to strike is of critical importance not only for themselves, but for the entire working class in Canada and internationally. It is precisely for this reason that postal workers must seize the opportunity to mobilize their colleagues throughout the logistics sector and workers across

all other economic sectors in a powerful working-class counteroffensive to beat back the ruling elite’s demands.

This struggle cannot be won through appeals to the government or reliance on the trade union apparatus, which is working hand in hand with the corporations and the state. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Unifor and CUPW have all repeatedly shown that their primary concern is to keep workers trapped within the narrow confines of collective bargaining, parliamentary appeals and toothless protest actions.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) was established last year by Canada Post workers for the purpose of taking control of the contract fight out of the hands of the CUPW bureaucracy and, in affiliation with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), developing ties with postal workers internationally, including in the United States, Britain, and Germany who face the same onslaught on their jobs and living standards.

The PWRFC’s founding statement, issued in June 2024, put forward demands which remain critical in guiding the postal workers’ struggle:

Full pension, full pay rate and full benefits to all employees!

No more contracting out of jobs!

- Workers must have control over the introduction and development of all new technologies, so they are used to improve working conditions and service, not increasing worker exploitation!

The postal service should not be run as a profit-making concern!

This is a critical moment for postal workers at Canada Post: Do not let this fight be strangled by CUPW! What is urgently needed is a political mobilization of the working class, independent of and in opposition to the trade union bureaucracy. Join the PWRFC and build rank-and-file committees in every postal facility to take control of the struggle, prepare for mass strike action, and link up with other sections of workers—railway workers, education workers, public sector workers and Amazon warehouse workers across Canada, the United States, Mexico and beyond.

The outcome of this fight will not be decided at the negotiating table. It will be determined by the degree to which workers take matters into their own hands and unite across industries and borders in a common fight against austerity, inequality and corporate dictatorship. The conditions for such a fight are ripe, but it requires the initiative of workers facing these attacks to build a movement capable of winning their demands.



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