

# Liberal government to force Canada Post workers to vote on company's "best and final" offer

**Our reporters**  
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The federal Liberal government's Minister for Jobs and Families, Patty Hajdu, ordered postal workers Thursday to vote on Canada Post's "best and final" contract offers.

The vote will be organized by the pro-big business Canada Industrial Relations Board, the same mechanism the government employed last December to illegalize a month-long postal strike.

If the Liberal government can intervene yet again so brazenly on the side of the employer, and with the confidence that there will be no effective worker response, it is above all due to the sabotage of the postal workers' struggle by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) leadership. Working in close concert with the Canadian Labour Congress, the CUPW bureaucracy has contrived to demobilize and isolate the 55,000 Canada Post workers at every stage of their 18-month-long contract battle.

On May 30, the Crown Corporation first urged Hajdu to order votes on its contract proposals for urban postal operations (UPO) workers and rural and suburban mail carriers (RSMCs) using the draconian powers given her under article 108.1 of the Canada Labour Code.

The union's response was to plead for binding arbitration, offering to surrender workers' rights to strike and even vote on their terms of employment, if the government refrained from imposing a forced vote on Canada Post's sweeping concession demands.

These would open the door to a massive restructuring of Canada Post's operations at workers' expense, through the wholesale destruction of full-time postal worker jobs and the use of AI and other new technologies to massively increase workloads.

Canada Post's offers include a pathetic 13 percent pay "increase" over four years, which falls well short of inflation and does nothing to help workers catch up after years of concessions. New temporary and part-time job categories would be created to expand delivery to seven days a week, while dynamic routing would be rolled out across the country. Dynamic routing means mail carriers' routes would be subject to daily change so as to ensure maximum workloads.

Postal workers voted by more than 95 percent for strike action last fall and showed great militancy during their 32-day strike. Many were prepared to defy the government's strikebreaking order.

But the CUPW leadership has done everything to weaken and demoralize postal workers. Seeing no way forward to win their struggle, a significant section could vote "yes" to Canada Post's contract offers. Whatever the exact vote tally, Canada Post and the government are banking on the forced vote serving to further divide and frustrate workers.

The basic premise of Canada Post's sweeping concessions demands is that the post office must operate as a profit-making capitalist concern. This goal is supported by the CUPW leadership.

It, the CLC and the labour bureaucracy as a whole are adamantly opposed to making the postal workers struggle the spearhead of a working class counter-offensive in defence of public services and the right to strike and against capitalist austerity and war.

In an article published last month, the *World Socialist Web Site* briefly reviewed how the union leadership has systematically sabotaged the postal workers' struggle. The union leadership's actions include:

Delaying the start of last year's strike by two weeks in November in the name of staying at the "bargaining table," in spite of an overwhelming, more than 95 percent rank-and-file vote for strike action.

Isolating workers on the picket lines for close to a month and opposing any broadening of the movement to workers at Canada Post-owned Purolator and other logistics companies.

Failing to alert workers to the inevitability of government intervention and outlining what the union leadership proposed to do to oppose it; then enforcing the illegal back-to-work order when it finally came from the Liberal government in December, in the face of widespread calls from the rank and file that it be defied.

Promoting the government-established Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC) as an open forum where workers could have their voices heard, when in reality it was a setup from the outset, based on the suppression of workers' collective action and dominated by trusted representatives of big business. As was intended, the IIC, headed by long-term federal arbitrator Robert Kaplan, served as the instrument for drawing up the bosses' battle plan against postal workers.

Meeting with then Labour Minister Stephen MacKinnon, the very man who criminalized the postal workers' strike, to work out "Team Canada" trade war measures, which CUPW touted like all the other unions as aimed at protecting Canadian workers.

Claiming that postal workers had the opportunity during the federal election campaign to take forward their struggle by voting for the New Democrats, the same party that secured a parliamentary majority for the strikebreaking Liberals for over five years. At Thursday evening's meeting, (CUPW President Jan) Simpson had the audacity to claim that the ultimate election of the former central banker and Liberal leader Mark Carney as prime minister was the "second-best" outcome that postal workers could have hoped for.

Seeking to cover its tracks, CUPW has issued a statement denouncing Hajdu's order compelling workers to vote on Canada Post's "best and final offers." National president Jan Simpson called on postal workers to "stand together and vote no." She added, "We will not stand by as the Government and Canada Post work together to try to undermine our hard-fought rights, gut our collective agreements and re-write them on their own terms. Postal workers know how to fight back. We've done it before, and we're ready to do it again."

The fact of the matter is that there is no way for workers to fight back if they "stand together" with the CUPW leadership. When postal workers regained their right to strike last month after the government's six-month strike ban expired, CUPW blocked a national strike in favour of a toothless overtime ban, which is having virtually no impact on Canada Post operations due to the diversion of mail to other providers.

A "No" vote is necessary, but this step alone is inadequate. If workers vote down the agreement, the government will still have the option of imposing binding arbitration. And if and when it does so, it will invariably instruct the arbitrator to make the IIC's anti-worker report the basis for the dictated contracts.

The union has already legitimized such action, first with its support for the rigged, blatantly anti-workers IIC process; and then with its call for workers' contracts to be dictated by an arbitrator.

A "No" vote by workers must be combined with an entirely new strategy. Workers must broaden the postal workers' fight

into an industrial and political counteroffensive of the entire working class in defence of the right to strike and good-paying, secure jobs. The issues over which postal workers are fighting, including how AI and new technologies are deployed, are issues concerning all workers, whether they work in auto, the public sector, the energy sector, healthcare, or elsewhere.

This is precisely why all of corporate Canada and its government, led by the former central banker Mark Carney, stand firmly behind Canada Post. They want to inflict an exemplary defeat on the postal workers to put down a marker for the intensification of the coming onslaught on the rights and conditions of all workers, and the gutting of public services, to pay for a massive military build-up and the further enrichment of the already fabulously wealthy oligarchy.

To fight for their interests in opposition to this class war agenda, postal workers must build rank-and-file committees in every distribution center and sorting facility across the country. These committees will give workers on the shop floor the means to seize control of the contract struggle and advance demands based on what they need, not what the company claims is affordable to stay "profitable." They can also serve as a basis to extend the fight to other sections of workers, first and foremost delivery workers at Purolator, Amazon, and other private providers, as well as workers throughout all economic sectors in a common struggle for workers' power and socialism.

This perspective of struggle is the only realistic one under the present conditions. As the war on the working class by the ruling class escalates—underscored by the Liberal government's announcement of an immediate 17 percent military spending hike and its ongoing efforts to reach an economic and security agreement with the would-be fascist dictator Trump—the working class is the only social force capable of defending social and democratic rights. Postal workers must make themselves the spearhead of this struggle.



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