Postal workers once again at a crossroads as Canada Post submits its “transformation plan”

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We encourage all postal workers to contact the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee at canadapostworkersrfc@gmail.com or by filling out the form at the end of this article.

With Canada Post and the federal Liberal government moving rapidly to implement their plans to dramatically downsize the post office, postal workers are at a pivotal point in their year-long struggle to defend their jobs and working conditions and protect a foundational public service.

At the beginning of the week, Canada Post announced it had submitted its restructuring plan to the federal government, meeting the 45-day deadline set out in September by Liberal Minister of Government Transformation Joël Lightbound.

The corporation’s statement was deliberately vague, confirming only that the plan had been delivered and that details would remain secret until Ottawa gives its approval. CEO Doug Ettinger declared that, “Canadians deserve a postal service that is strong, stable and focused on meeting their changing needs, and we are focused on delivering that.”

In other words, tens of thousands of postal workers are being kept in the dark about the future of their jobs and livelihoods, while management and the government implement the plans they have already agreed on behind closed doors. These plans include scrapping daily and home mail-delivery, closing hundreds of rural and suburban post offices, eliminating tens of thousands of full-time jobs, and increasing the workloads of those who remain through AI-driven dynamic routing.

Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) chief negotiator Jim Gallant complained to CTV News that Canada Post is keeping its plans “close to the vest,” an understatement that captures both the surreal character of what are being called contract negotiations and the union’s complicity.

The talks between Canada Post management and CUPW are a fraud and a smokescreen. Liberal government ministers hypocritically declare their support for a collective bargaining process they have repeatedly tried to short-circuit, while working with management to gut the post office at the expense of postal workers and the public. Without the participation of the workers whose livelihoods are on the line, they are dictating a restructuring that will determine the essentials of any new “collective agreement.”

The Liberal government-directed shrinking of Canada Post is inseparable from the austerity and militarist agenda codified in banker Prime Minister Mark Carney’s recently tabled “Canada Strong” federal budget. Presented as an “investment” and “rebalancing” plan to strengthen the nation, the budget is a blueprint for funneling public resources into the military, corporate tax incentives, big business subsidies and the expansion of Canada’s military-industrial complex through massive cuts to public services and the elimination of tens of thousands of public-sector jobs.

Canada Post has been chosen as a test case to demonstrate Ottawa’s willingness to impose “tough decisions” at the expense of the working class and to set a precedent for the dismantling of other public services and agencies. By targeting postal workers—a section of the workforce with a long record of militancy—the government aims to send an unmistakable signal that no public service and no collective agreement will stand in the way of its drive for “fiscal sustainability” and “global competitiveness.”

The assault on Canada Post thus goes far beyond the corporation itself. It is part of a coordinated campaign by the Carney government and the financial elite—seizing on the opportunity presented by the economic turmoil triggered by US President Donald Trump’s trade war—to implement a long desired restructuring of class relations, eviscerate the right to strike and impose a new social order in which democratic and workers’ rights are subordinated entirely to the interests of capital and the preparation for imperialist war.

The union leadership responded to Canada Post’s latest offer by doubling down on its insistence that the postal service be run as a profit-making concern at workers’ expense. The CUPW statement enthused “financial self sustainability within reach,” hailing the recent increase in stamp rates as providing a basis for the Crown corporation to break even.

The statement also noted how Canada Post had submitted its restructuring plan to the government within the 45-day limit set down by Minister of Transformation Joel Lightbound September 25. CUPW declared, “At the time of writing, Canada Post said it will continue to work with the Government [and] share the plan ‘once it is finalized and endorsed.’ Canadians deserve a say in this plan before it is finalized. Once again, the real owners—the public—are being cut out of the process. The Union has also not seen or heard of any details of Canada Post’s plan.”

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Nobody, least of all Canada Post workers, should take this feigned outrage for good coin. After all, it was Lightbound's September 25 announcement that triggered the spontaneous walkout by postal workers, forcing the recalcitrant union bureaucracy to call a national strike. Rank-and-file workers clearly had an understanding at that point of how Lightbound was conniving behind the scenes with Canada Post management, and were ready to fight to halt the dismantling of the postal service. It is worth recalling that Lightbound's statement was accompanied by a September 25 directive lifting the moratorium on rural and suburban post-office closures and authorizing community-mailbox conversions, giving a green light for mass job cuts and the gutting of public services.

However, the strike was sabotaged by the CUPW leadership, which unilaterally transformed it into toothless rotating strikes that exclude most major urban areas. At the same time, CUPW resumed talks with Canada Post, full in the knowledge that they were cooperating with the central banker Carney's government to inflict a devastating defeat on postal workers. Now, after declarations about their effort to find "common ground" with the job-cutters-in-chief, they want to persuade workers of their shock and surprise at not being kept updated on the details of how the Carney government and Canada Post plan to eliminate tens of thousands of jobs.

The union apparatus's stand on the side of the bosses and government ministers is clear. For over a year, the CUPW leadership has systematically demobilized and isolated postal workers and opposed any broader mobilization of the working class to defend public services and the right to strike. It dragged its feet on calling a strike last year and refused to prepare for defiance of a government back-to-work order after the strike finally began in November 2024. When the Trudeau Liberal government outlawed the national walkout last December, CUPW helped enforce compliance and hailed the government's Industrial Inquiry Commission (IIC) as an opportunity for "our voices to be heard."

The commission, headed by William Kaplan, a seasoned mediator and arbitrator trusted by the government and big business, predictably produced a restructuring blueprint that was copied and pasted from management's demands for slashing jobs, using new technologies to intensify exploitation and converting full-time positions into casual and part-time work. After the strike ban unilaterally imposed by the government expired in May, CUPW spent June and July begging the government to enforce binding arbitration and refusing to act on workers' strike mandate.

Canada Post's plan is designed to make the corporation "profitable" by destroying tens of thousands of positions, including through the implementation of AI technology, and turning those who remain into "Amazonified" gig-style labourers moving an increasing volume of parcels for private corporations at poverty wages. The working class is being told to accept these sacrifices so that the state can divert billions to corporate subsidies, tax cuts for the wealthy, and the rearmament of Canadian imperialism to prepare for war, above all against Russia and China.

Postal workers, like teachers in Alberta, transit workers in Montreal and Air Canada flight attendants, confront government-led assaults to impose the full cost of the capitalist crisis on working people. Every step of this process has been facilitated by a nationalist, pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, which enjoys extensive corporatist ties to the state and big business.

CUPW's bankrupt appeals to the Liberals to "listen" or to "consider the workers' perspective" only serve to buy time for the government to implement its plans. The bureaucrats' real fear is not that the government will go too far, but that workers will begin to act independently of their control.

There is a way forward. The conditions exist for postal workers to unite their struggle with the broader movement developing in the working class across Canada and internationally in opposition to austerity and war. To do that, they must take the initiative out of the hands of CUPW and build rank-and-file committees in every sorting plant, depot and station. These committees must demand the immediate publication of the full transformation plan and all annexes, refuse any agreement that cuts jobs or undermines service and coordinate nationally through the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. They must reach out to workers in logistics, transportation and the public sector who face the same attacks and are ready to fight.

As the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) outlined in August after workers overwhelmingly rejected a sellout in a government-forced vote, "Our strike must become the launching pad for a renewed fight based on an entirely new strategy … against capitalist austerity and war."

This strategy requires the unification of workers' struggles across Canada and internationally. In all of the major countries of Europe and North America, postal and logistics workers are under sustained attack. This is one front on a sweeping onslaught by the financial oligarchy against worker rights, public services, and social spending. To prepare the mass mobilization of the working class in a counteroffensive for decent-paying, secure jobs for all, workers' control over production and the use of new technologies like AI, and the expropriation of the oligarchs' ill-gotten billions, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committee (IWA-RFC) is holding an online meeting this Sunday. We urge all Canada Post workers looking for a way forward in their struggle against management, the Carney government, and the union bureaucrats to make plans to attend.

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