

One month after announcing sellout agreements, Canadian Union of Postal Workers reveals major concessions to management

Pierre Lajeunesse
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Postal workers who want to discuss the way forward in their struggle and share their views on the tentative agreements should contact the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee at canadapostworkersrfc@gmail.com or by filling out the form at the end of this article.

More than a month after the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) announced it had reached tentative agreements with Canada Post, the full proposed contracts remain under lock and key, keeping rank-and-file postal workers in the dark about the language that would govern their jobs and working lives until January 2029.

However, the selective “highlights” released by the union bureaucracy make clear that the agreements constitute a sweeping sellout, paving the way for mass job destruction, intensified exploitation and the transformation of Canada Post into a precarious, Amazon-style logistics operation. They underline the repeated warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site*: that Mark Carney’s Liberal government wants to use Canada Post as a test case for a massive across-the-board onslaught on worker rights and conditions, and second, that the CUPW leadership and entire trade union bureaucracy is fully complicit in this process.

Postal workers must respond by broadening their struggle and mobilize the full social power of the working class. The conditions exist to do so because all workers, public and private sector alike, confront the same attacks on their jobs, public services and the right to strike, and have a direct stake in securing the job protections and improved conditions demanded by postal workers for over two years.

CUPW announced an “agreement in principle” in late November and immediately suspended all job action—despite the fact that no finalized contract text existed.

Rank-and-file workers who had forced CUPW to sanction a nationwide walkout—the second in less than a year—in response to the Carney government’s September announcement of a massive restructuring of Canada Post, including the destruction of thousands of jobs, were ordered back to work in October without a vote. They were told to trust that their interests would be protected while management, the union apparatus and the very government officials responsible for the attack finalized contract details behind closed doors.

The CUPW apparatus is attempting to lull workers into complacency by boasting that controversial measures such as dynamic routing, route restructuring and load levelling have been dropped. These claims are fraudulent. In the context of the broader restructuring plan, the removal of a handful of immediate flashpoints functions as a poison pill. Once the agreements are ratified, management will proceed with a wholesale reorganization that guts jobs, slashes delivery standards and radically

alters working conditions. The “Amazonification” of Canada Post is not being abandoned; it is being implemented through other mechanisms embedded in the contracts and sanctioned by the government.

The CUPW leadership is now promising to release the full contracts prior to ratification. But the delay in doing so is calculated to further demobilize the rank and file and stymie workers’ efforts to organize opposition. On November 21, the National Executive Board announced an “agreement in principle” with Canada Post. More than two months on, workers still have only been provided selective summaries of what has been agreed to, meant to promote ratification and hide the real consequences.

This lack of transparency has understandably fueled growing anger and distrust. The union bureaucracy clearly fears that it may struggle to smuggle the massive concessions past postal workers, who have repeatedly demonstrated their readiness to fight. This explains why five out of the 15 members of CUPW’s national executive voted against the deal, including President Jan Simpson.

This miserable attempt to create an alibi for the very individuals responsible for leading the postal workers’ struggle into a dead end and conspiring with management at the “bargaining table” on how best to impose their dictates should fool no one. Rank-and-file workers should take it as a sign of the concern within the upper echelons of the bureaucracy about the prospect of opposition on the shop floor escaping CUPW’s control. They should redouble their efforts to build rank-and-file committees in every sorting centre and distribution hub across the country to develop the struggle as a political fight against Canada Post management and its backers in the Carney government.

The Liberal government plan to dismantle Canada Post and CUPW’s complicity

In September, the Liberal government—which banned the 2024 postal workers’ month-long strike by invoking anti-democratic provisions in section 107 of the Canada Labour Code—attacked again. It authorized Canada Post to end door-to-door mail delivery, expand the use of community mailboxes, lengthen delivery standards for letters and close or convert post offices to private franchises, particularly in rural and suburban areas. Canada Post management has openly discussed eliminating up to 30,000 jobs by 2035.

President and CEO Doug Ettinger promised that the corporation will

“break even” by 2030 during testimony before the House of Commons government operations committee in December. Asked when Canada Post would become financially sustainable, he stated that the corporation’s plan had been shaped around the government’s September restructuring announcement. He insisted that government bailouts must end, and that “investment” was required to make Canada Post more “competitive.”

Given that the company has posted approximately \$5 billion in losses since 2018, such a turnaround will only be done on the backs of workers and through the gutting of postal services. The CUPW leadership fully endorses the aim of returning Canada Post to “profitability.”

The content of the tentative agreements aligns seamlessly with this agenda. New job classifications such as Permanent Flex Employees (PFEs), Part-Time Unstructured (PTU) workers and Parcel Delivery Part Time (PD PT) employees are explicitly designed to erode established routes, eliminate overtime and replace stable full-time employment with precarious labour in both the urban postal operations and rural and suburban mail carrier units.

These classifications mirror the two-tier schemes imposed in the auto industry, which were sold as temporary compromises but permanently degraded conditions for younger workers, while dragging down standards for all workers and boosting corporate profits after the 2008 global financial crisis.

A Canada Post worker who spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* explained that many postal workers feel pressured to accept the agreements because they are exhausted and financially strained after nearly two years of a struggle which has been drawn out and isolated by the union bureaucracy. CUPW has exploited this by presenting the deal as a form of “grandfathering,” preserving existing conditions for current workers while conceding the future to management’s dictates. This is a trap. Two-tier systems are designed to pit workers against one another and provide management with the leverage to gut wages, benefits and working conditions for all.

What’s more, there is nothing inevitable about the hopeless dead end where postal workers currently find themselves. The CUPW leadership has systematically led the contract struggle into the sand by blocking any appeal to all delivery workers and public sector workers whose jobs and conditions face the same threats. Earlier this month, it was revealed that close to 10,000 federal government workers have received warning notices that their jobs could go. On Friday, 1,200 workers at GM’s Oshawa assembly plant worked their last shift as the highly profitable automaker imposed long-announced mass layoffs. CUPW has done nothing to unite postal workers with these workers in a common fight against layoffs and austerity but has worked tirelessly to prevent such unity by invoking the inviolability of the pro-employer “collective bargaining” system, which government officials, management executives and union bureaucrats use to ram concessions down workers’ throats.

CUPW’s own updates reveal the scale of the concessions. Under the new arrangements, PFEs may be assigned weekend work and “additional duties as deemed appropriate by the corporation,” stripping route holders of overtime and undermining any predictable schedule. PTU and PD PT positions involve “unstructured work,” granting management unilateral authority to carve up routes and reassign hours. The introduction of weekend delivery staffed by new part-time classifications represents a historic concession, normalizing seven-day operations and eroding holidays.

For rural and suburban mail carriers (RSMCs), the shift to an hourly rate system—falsely presented as a longstanding demand—threatens a substantial pay cut. Route values will be capped, overtime opportunities eliminated and fixed start and end times imposed. Faster, more experienced workers will be punished, while management gains the power to pile on additional work without extra compensation. Virtual restructures, carried out through AI-driven routing and remote meetings,

have already produced chaos, with routes lengthened, distances increased and grievances piling up.

On wages, CUPW has agreed to suspend the cost-of-living allowance and entirely tie wage “increases” in the contracts’ third, fourth and fifth years to the consumer price index (CPI). This guarantees real-wage erosion. Official CPI figures systematically understate the actual cost increases faced by workers, particularly for housing, food and transportation. By accepting CPI indexation without robust, automatic COLA protections, the union has handed management and the government a mechanism to steadily undermine living standards.

The agreements would bar strike action until at least 2029, precisely as the Carney government’s restructuring goes into high gear. They provide Canada Post and the big business Liberal government with “labour peace” as they carry out service cuts, job eliminations and the conversion of a public service into a low-wage logistics arm competing with Amazon, UPS and DHL.

A new strategy is needed

CUPW and the broader union bureaucracy from the Canada Labour Congress (CLC) on down have worked systematically to conceal the political character of this struggle. Prime Minister Mark Carney has openly declared Canada Post “unviable.” But he considers it “viable” to gut worker rights in order to fund tens of billions of dollars in additional military spending so that Canadian imperialism can ruthlessly pursue the profit interests of the financial oligarchy in wars around the world.

Postal workers must defend the right to strike, demand emerging technologies like AI not be used to intensify exploitation, but rather ease the burden of labour under workers’ control, and fight for job security and wages that keep pace with the cost of living. These are issues that all workers would fight for if they were armed with the necessary political understanding and organizational framework to participate in the struggle.

What is required is a new strategy and new forms of organization. Postal workers must take control of their struggle through the building of rank-and-file committees in every depot and facility, independent of the union bureaucracy. The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee, affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, is fighting to unite postal workers across Canada with workers internationally in a common struggle against capitalist austerity, war and the gigification of work.

The defense of Canada Post as a public service and the defense of decent, secure jobs cannot be reconciled with the CUPW-backed profit mandates of the government and management. Only through the independent mobilization of the working class, guided by a socialist perspective, can this onslaught be stopped. Postal workers should decisively reject the tentative agreements and join the fight to build rank-and-file power in Canada and internationally.



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