

# Canada Post workers vote reluctantly for concessions-filled contracts as government-backed jobs massacre continues

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The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) announced June 1 that both bargaining units—representing 55,000 letter carriers, mail truck drivers, post office clerks and sorting plant workers—had voted in favour of new contracts. Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMC) voted by 85.9 percent and Urban Postal Operations (UPO) by 90 percent to ratify the tentative five-year agreements, which expire January 31, 2029.

The union's success in selling out the contract struggle paves the way for the corporation, in close coordination with the Liberal government and the union, to implement Phase 1 of the restructuring of the Canada Post Corporation (CPC). This includes the reduction of postal workers by up to two-thirds over 10 years, the elimination of door-to-door delivery over five years, the implementation of new technologies to increase workloads and surveillance and the general Amazonification of the post office.

The restructuring of the postal service has been aggressively promoted by the Liberal government. It hopes to use the attacks enforced on us as a benchmark to slash wages and eliminate job protections and other worker rights for all workers, private and public sector alike. The onslaught on worker rights and conditions is deemed necessary by the ruling class to ensure the "global competitiveness" of Canadian capitalism and fund a massive military build-up so Canada can wage war around the world.

The voting results are not an expression of workers' support, let alone enthusiasm, for the concessions-filled contracts. Rather they express the lack of confidence among the rank and file that the CUPW bureaucracy could achieve anything or would wage any serious struggle. After more than two years of the CUPW leadership isolating postal workers, conniving behind the scenes with management and the Liberal government, and blocking any attempt to broaden the fight to other sections of workers confronting the same attacks, the prevailing mood among workers was that they had no other option but to accept.

The union has yet to release the participation rate in the vote, but it would not be surprising to learn that it was low. Workers at Britain's Royal Mail recently grudgingly passed an agreement, with the Communication Workers Union confirming May 29 a historic low turnout of just 32 percent. As analyzed by the *World*

*Socialist Web Site*, "This is not an endorsement—it is a de facto vote of no confidence in the CWU bureaucracy." Like our struggle at Canada Post, workers in the UK are fighting privatization and the destruction of their conditions.

The union bureaucracy agreed to concessions behind closed doors, then presented us with threats of even worse deals, effectively blackmailing workers into accepting the appalling terms. A union headline claimed that "These agreements are the best we can get."

Until the very end, the bureaucracy remained extremely nervous that its corporatist relations with CPC management and the government and complicity in their assault on postal workers would trigger mass opposition. Union officials responded with hostility to efforts by supporters of the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee (PWRFC) to distribute a statement at CUPW Local 503 (Barrie, Ontario) on May 30 outlining the way forward for the postal workers' struggle. While calling for rejection of the sell-out agreements, the PWRFC statement explained that if postal workers are to prevail, the rank and file must take the struggle into their own hands:

We will not sugar coat the truth. Important and necessary as such a vote would be, it alone will not suffice. To defeat the Liberal government and corporate Canada—for it is they ultimately who determine the class-war policies of Canada Post management—postal workers must adopt a new strategy based on the mobilization of the social power of the working class.

Immediately preceding the 9 am vote, the thuggish bureaucrats, including a union executive who refused to give his name, emerged from the venue, took a leaflet, and immediately threw it back in our reporter's face, calling him a "clown." When the PWRFC returned for the 1pm vote, distributing statements from the sidewalk, two thugs from the executive were waiting. Hurling expletives at our reporters, they threatened to call the police, then reached into the cars of each worker and snatched copies of the statement out of workers' hands, grunting the words "I'll take that!"

The CUPW leadership also felt the need to construct an elaborate theater of opposition to the agreement they played a central role in negotiating. Five members of the National Executive Board (NEB), including CUPW national president Jan Simpson, called for a “No” vote, but offered nothing in the way of a perspective as to what workers should do differently to achieve better terms. Simpson stated, “We recognize the challenges our employer is facing, and our goal is not to simply make demands, but to work together toward solutions.”

“Work together” with a corporation hell bent on razing our workforce to boost corporate profits is precisely what all the union bureaucrats have done! Simpson’s dissent was a political alibi, aiming to channel anger back into the apparatus. The entire CUPW leadership worked over recent months to demobilize us and conceal what they were agreeing to behind the scenes with the government.

We went out on strike twice within a year, once for four weeks at the end of 2024 and again last fall. On both occasions, the impulse for the walkout came from the rank and file. The bureaucrats, meanwhile, worked to isolate us on the picket lines and send us back to work at the first possible opportunity. First time around, they bowed to a unilateral government back-to-work order without organizing any resistance to the abrogation of our right to strike. After turning our second nationwide strike into a bogus “rotating” strike that involved only a handful of minor rural areas last October, the union leadership declared that an “agreement in principle” was announced in November. However, the full draft contract text was not concluded until late December, more than 2 months after our October wildcat strike was shut down. That delay can be explained by what the “agreement in principle” actually was—a promise to not disrupt the Christmas profits as we laboured under a long-expired contract.

A postal worker interviewed by the WSWS in January commented that colleagues felt “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.” We made major monetary sacrifices with nothing to show.

The CUPW used the classic “grandfathering” trap, presented as preserving conditions for current workers. Appealing to immediate self-interest, the union concedes the future, even as new workload measurement systems erode working conditions for experienced workers and new hires alike. Workers who were told they will be “grandfathered in” voted “yes” in the hopes of protecting what they have, not because they support what is coming.

However, no credence should be given to claims the “grandfather” clauses will protect even high seniority workers. Management is no doubt already scheming to force high-seniority workers into retirement through increased surveillance, harassment and workloads—including in open violation of the new contracts, knowing the CUPW apparatus will roll over.

The union’s role as a police force for management was underscored in Simpson’s statement announcing the contract vote results. Abandoning her posture as an opponent of the agreements, she blandly stated, “Over the course of this round of bargaining, postal workers have faced enormous challenges. It has not been

easy, but members have stood strong.

“We still have our work cut out for us. To win the fights ahead, prepare for the next round of bargaining and mobilize against the Government’s attacks on our public postal service, we all have to regroup and unite in our struggle.”

The next round of bargaining is almost three years away. While union bureaucrats can calmly “prepare” for this while they continue their collaboration with management and the government, thousands of our colleagues will have lost their jobs by that point. As for “regrouping and uniting,” rank-and-file workers cannot take a single step forward in the coming struggles in alliance with the union bureaucrats who have sabotaged this contract fight.

Postal workers who want to overturn the historic attacks on their livelihoods and protect their jobs going forward must break with the CUPW bureaucracy, join the PWRFC, and establish rank-and-file committees at every workplace across the country.

Aligned with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), the PWRFC provides the organizational framework for workers to share information across depots, countries and industries with the aim of defending working conditions and wages for all. Through the IWA-RFC, postal workers can coordinate their fight with logistics workers around the world, workers in auto, manufacturing, and industry facing similar attacks on their wages and job security, and public service workers across Canada and beyond. They can counterpose an internationalist strategy to the globally organized exploitation of their labour by the major delivery giants, which ultimately sets the bar for conditions at national-based operators like Canada Post. We can win millions of allies in this fight as workers confront an explosion in the cost of living due to the US/Israeli war on Iran.

The CUPW was able to ram through these contracts above all because rank-and-file opposition remained disorganized. Faced with the destruction of Canada Post as we know it in the immediate period ahead and the Amazonification of all jobs that remain, workers cannot allow this state of affairs to last any longer. The urgent task now posed is to build the PWRFC to spearhead the mass industrial and political mobilization of the working class against capitalist austerity and the drive to transform public services like the postal service into for-profit enterprises.

The tasks of the PWRFC are as follows: Build rank-and-file committees in every CPC facility. Systematically document and expose the consequences of the agreements as they unfold. Connect the struggle to the broader Canadian working class, which confronts the Carney government’s massive rearmament program, and sweeping cuts to public spending and attacks on worker rights to pay for it. Build international ties through the IWA-RFC. If you’re ready to join this fight, contact us today.



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