



Via mail and email at: Tony.Clement@parl.gc.ca

June 11, 2013

Honourable Tony Clement, P.C., M.P.
President of the Treasury Board
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Clement,

On behalf of the Association of Justice Counsel (AJC) which represents over 2700 federal public service lawyers, I find it unfortunate and disturbing that you would choose the opening of National Public Service Week to announce another initiative disguised as “reform” but intended to distract and stir up more misinformed animus towards public servants and those who represent them.

As you are well aware, the long-term disability and sick leave available to public servants are terms and conditions of employment that must be negotiated in collective bargaining. We are prepared to discuss at the negotiating table how the existing system could benefit from retooling, as people often aren't getting the help they need to be rehabilitated for their return to work. However, to implicitly suggest that the public service is full of malingerers or people who abuse the system is not only wrong, it completely disregards this government's contribution in creating a demoralized and depressed public service through such initiatives as workforce adjustment and crippling cuts to departmental budgets.

This latest announcement comes on the heels of your performance management directive which is a classic example of fixing what isn't broken, at least for our members, who for years have been subject to annual performance reviews. Your senior Treasury Board officials were not able to provide the AJC with any concrete details on this initiative when we asked last week, nor were they able to explain how it would coincide with our current annual performance reviews, as outlined in Appendices B and C of our collective agreement. Clearly, your announcement on performance management was another hastily cobbled attempt to distract the public from the real problems facing this country and your government.

The laundry list of this government's attacks on the public service and its much-needed unions over the last few months is a long one: Bill C-377, the watering down of our pensions and, just last week, Bill C-525 which would make the federally-regulated union certification process the least democratic in the country. Still, your government's attacks on your own workers and their representatives have only strengthened our resolve. Despite your efforts, we are stronger and more united than ever.

The work of our members is one of the reasons for the success of democracy in our country. More broadly, the Canadian public service is the envy of the world for its integrity, merit-based system and non-partisanship. It is ironic that in your rush to reform it, you are jeopardizing its very future.

Lisa Blais
President, Association of Justice Counsel