



Dear Sir, Madam,

As the President of the Association of Justice Counsel (AJC), I believe in respect, due process, the protection of constitutional rights and fairness and that is why I'm writing to you today.

Over the last few months, federal employees like me and the 2700 members of the AJC — who are proud to serve Canadians across the country — have felt belittled by our present government, whether it's constant disrespect from Ministers in the media or the never-ending rounds of cuts.

Now comes Bill C-4, the Conservative government's omnibus budget bill that contains many elements that have absolutely nothing to do with the budget. It's a backhanded way of imposing important changes without true analysis or consultation.

The scope and breadth of these changes came as a shock to me. In particular, Division 17 of the Bill brings drastic amendments to the *Public Service Labour Relations Act (PSLRA)*. They basically gut the right to collective bargaining.

Since the 1960s, the *PSLRA* has been a roadmap used both by the government and its employees and it has helped ensure a decent working relationship. Its rules are understood and followed by all. Why impose these changes? The intent is clearly to weaken public sector unions as well as federal employees' rights.

Bill C-4:

- **Removes the right of unions to select arbitration as a mode of settling labour disputes (arbitration would only be an option if the employer agreed to this process);**
- **Gives the government unilateral power to decide which employees provide an 'essential service';**
- **Employees in bargaining groups where the government has designated 80 % to be essential will only be allowed to seek arbitration to settle impasses;**
- **Amends the factors that conciliators and arbitrators can consider when making an award or report - primary considerations for any settlement will be the state of the economy/the country's fiscal situation and whether the government faces a problem recruiting or attracting employees at the existing salaries.**

Taking away federal workers' rights and forcing them to strike rather than go the binding arbitration route will affect the services Canadians receive and serve to demoralize and frustrate labour relations even further. Arbitration has always been a choice in the past, a way to preserve services to the Canadian public and ensure federal workers and their families are treated with respect.

For a government that constantly trumpets that it wants to streamline operations, the amendments will also overcomplicate the grievance process. If Bill C-4 is passed, bargaining agents will now be forced to file multiple individual and group grievances in order to preserve members' remedial rights. Duplicated and multiple processes will not save money for Canadian taxpayers in the end.

All of these proposed amendments are traps set up to weaken federal employees' constitutionally protected right to collective bargaining and freedom of association. It's an attack on due process, a violation of Canada's International Labour Organization obligations and nothing less than an attack on dedicated, hard-working federal employees who are proud to serve their fellow Canadians.

As President of the Treasury Board, Tony Clement, the man responsible for the public service, should be working to improve relations with his employees, not demean them. I do not know of many CEOs in the private sector who would go out in public to constantly criticize their workers.

And so I ask you, Sir, Madam, to ensure that you are fully informed before contemplating any form of support for this legislation. We are hopeful that you will learn to appreciate the flaws both in terms of the questionable legislative process, i.e. budget bill approach, which restricts public consultation, and the actual substance of the bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Lisa Blais,

President of the Association of Justice Counsel

The Association of Justice Counsel is the exclusive bargaining agent for approximately 2,700 lawyers employed by the government of Canada (Federal Crown Counsel), who work for the Department of

Justice (DOJ), the Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC), and provide in-house legal services to various federal agencies, tribunals and courts across the country. www.ajc-ajj.com

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