



Ontario Nurses' Association

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SENT VIA EMAIL ONLY

Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Hon. Charles Sousa
Ontario Minister of Labour
14th Floor
400 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

Dear Premier McGuinty and Minister Sousa,

Re: Bill 45, *Labour Relations Amendment Act (Replacement Workers)*, 2010

On behalf of the Ontario Nurses' Association's (ONA) 55,000 registered nurse and allied health professional members, and more than 12,000 nursing student affiliates who provide care in every sector across the province, I am writing to urge you and all members of the Liberal Caucus to pass Bill 45, *Labour Relations Amendment Act (Replacement Workers)*, 2010.

All workers in Canada have the constitutionally-protected right to organize themselves, form unions and collectively bargain their working conditions. Generally this process works well; less than five percent of collective agreement negotiations result in strikes by employees or lock-outs by employers. However, when employers refuse to acknowledge their employees' legitimate choice to work together through a union and instead use replacement workers to avoid negotiations, the Ontario government's mediation services are insufficient.

As demonstrated by Intertape Polymer Group Inc.'s announcement last week that it is closing the Engineered Coated Products (ECP) plant in Brantford, employers do not feel compelled to bargain in good faith — or even bother negotiating at all — when they know that the provincial government will turn a blind eye to their use of temporary replacement workers.

The more than 84 United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1-500 members at that ECP plant whose jobs have now been terminated had been on the picket line for more than two and a half years. They were doing everything they could to protect the permanent, family-sustaining, good jobs that have made the middle class in Ontario a reality. Good jobs are crucial to the success of our economy and our province because they promote consumer spending and enable contributions to our tax base. Good jobs are also the catalyst for improved health outcomes, educational achievement and overall social mobility.

The ECP example is pertinent because employees of the same corporation who work in British Columbia, a province where the use of replacement workers has been banned since 1993, negotiated a fair contract (including a wage increase) while employees in Ontario could not compel ECP to return to the bargaining table despite offering concessions (including a wage cut). Québec's anti-replacement worker legislation has helped to promote good jobs in that jurisdiction for nearly three and a half decades, and similar legislation that existed here prior to 1996 should never have been repealed.

A law that prohibits the use of replacement workers is needed to prevent prolonged labour disputes and the devastation that happens to Ontario communities when good jobs are lost because deadbeat employers know they can get away with exploiting workers.

Whether they be the front-line health care professionals who are members of ONA, the drivers and tradespersons who operate and maintain our transportation systems, the teachers who help to educate our children, the retail service people who provide the goods and services we need, or the factory workers who make the tangible things that we buy, Ontario workers deserve to be protected by their government from employers who prioritize short-term savings over the success and wellbeing of our communities.

I call on you to vote in favour of Bill 45 at second reading and ensure that all Ontario Liberal Party MPPs use their votes to adopt this bill before the end of the current legislative session.

Sincerely,

ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION



Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN
President

lhs/km/lm

C: Board of Directors and Local Coordinators, Ontario Nurses' Association
Ontario Liberal Party Caucus
Andrea Horwath, MPP (Hamilton Centre), Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario
Peter Kormos, MPP (Welland), Labour Critic, New Democratic Party of Ontario
France Gélinas, MPP (Nickel Belt)
Bruce Weber, President, Local 1-500, United Steelworkers of America
Wayne Fraser, Director, District 6, United Steelworkers of America
Don Guest, First Vice-President, Brantford and District Labour Council
Sid Ryan, President, Ontario Federation of Labour
Jamie Kyriacou, Ontario Regional Director, Canadian Nursing Students' Association
Branden Shepitka, President, Canadian Nursing Students' Association
Sandy Hudson, Chairperson, Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario