

September 13, 2023

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Via email: pm@pm.gc.ca

RE: Ports and the Canada Labour Code

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

On behalf of members of the Canadian agriculture sector, we are writing to request amendments to the Canada Labour Code which would improve the reliability and effectiveness of Canada's ports.

The agriculture and agri-food sector is a key driver to the Canadian economy. Last year approximately \$92 billion worth of agriculture products were exported while contributing \$143.8 billion to Canada's gross domestic product. Canada's ports play an indispensable role in achieving this value due to our sector being highly dependent on exporting product to overseas' markets.

On June 28, 2023, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Canada issued a 72-hour strike notice. This resulting strike lasted 13 days and caused a stoppage of vessel loading and unloading at all port terminals in British Columbia.

The resulting strike had a significant impact on numerous industries including the agriculture sector. This is due to longshore workers forming a critical link in Canada's supply. Longshore workers are responsible for loading and unloading container cargo and bulk materials from vessels which arrive and depart at Canada's ports. If this critical link of the supply chain is missing, then cascading effects will be felt by all participants within the chain – including purchasers of Canadian exports and every Canadian working to meet export demand. This is particularly evident within the agriculture sector which relies on this just-in-time transportation structure.

Canada is an exporting nation. Since 1992 international trade has contributed to more than half the value of Canada's GDP. The flow of goods and the success generated from trade are intimately tied to our standard of living. Agriculture – and many other industries – have no other viable alternatives if the flow of goods is halted at port. Countries around the world purchase Canadian agricultural product due its high quality. However, if these high-quality products are unable to reach overseas customers, in the event of a port strike, this consequently impacts the Canadian brand and our reliability as an exporting nation.

In 1998 amendments were made to the Canada Labour Code, sponsored by Minister MacAulay, which prohibited the cessation of work among long-shore workers loading grain vessels during a strike or lockout. We recommend additional amendments to the Canada Labour Code which would result in long-shore workers continuing to provide services to *all* vessels in the event of a strike or lockout. Minister O'Regan recently commented that 'greater stability' is needed within the supply chain. We believe such amendments would provide this stability while ensuring Canada remains a reliable trading partner along with protecting the livelihoods of Canada.



Thank you for reading this letter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Todd Lewis
First Vice-President
Canadian Federation of Agriculture

CC:

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr., Minister of Labour and Seniors
The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Transport and Quebec Lieutenant
The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
The Honourable Anita Anand, President of the Treasury Board
The Honourable Rechie Valdez, Minister of Small Business
The Honourable Karina Gould, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons
The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development
The Honourable Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages
The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic
The Honourable Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Official Opposition
Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party
Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party