

# Political Landscape

## BILL C-525

*Would Make it Almost Impossible for Workers to Organize and Stay Organized*



**B**ill C-525 calls for a secret ballot to be held by employees when certifying or decertifying a Union. While the federal Conservatives consider the Bill "democratic," it effectively works against Unions making it easy to decertify a Union, but very difficult to organize workers.

Currently, when at least 50% of workers sign cards to organize, a Union can be certified. This method is called the "card-check process." The new model, however, requires 45% of a unit to sign membership cards **along** with the addition of a secret ballot vote that requires over 50% of all workers to vote in favour of Union certification. Essentially, **workers who do not vote are automatically counted against Union certification.** This shift away from the original model would make it difficult to organize votes for bargaining units across the country - especially those in the transport sector.

The same method would be used when decertifying a Union. Over 50% of votes from the entire bargaining unit would be required to remain certified. In general, this new bill will make it much more difficult to create new bargaining units and easy to decertify existing ones. The bill is just another method the Conservative government is using to decrease Union power.

Employer intimidation is an additional concern to consider. Because of longer wait times to certify a Union, employers would be provided with a window of opportunity to discourage workers from organizing. Intimidation tactics could occur in the form of anti-union meetings, talks and implicit job threats.

NDP MP for Parkdale-High Park, Peggy Nash sees major problems ahead if Bill C-525 is implemented.

"Ultimately, what the government would like to do is see a decline in Union representation, federally, in this country," said Nash. "I think what Canadians will quickly see is that, as we have seen in the United States, this will be an attack on middle-class living standards in this country. Working people will earn less, have fewer rights in the workplace and have less democratic input into the workplace where they spend most of their lives... It will undermine the middle-class standard of living and it will increase inequality."

*"Ultimately, what the government would like to do is see a decline in Union representation, federally, in this country... this will be an attack on middle-class living standards in this country."*

*"The Bill is just another method the Conservative government is using to decrease Union power."*

## BILL C-4

*Promising Dangerous Changes to Work Safety Rules and a Breakdown of Union Bargaining Rights*

**B**ill C-4 is another explosive bill that the federal Conservatives have proposed in an effort to dismantle Unions. If passed, Bill C-4 promises to diminish government union bargaining rights, unfairly rework the arbitration process, change rules around worker safety and limit worker access to the Canadian Human Rights Commission and Tribunal.

The Bill would allow the government to decide which workers are deemed essential and, therefore, forbidden from striking. Essential workers would be selected as such by the government without a third party review. Bill C-4 would additionally deny workers the right to refer a dispute to arbitration unless more than 80% of those workers are deemed essential. This would give the government unfair leverage when facing potential disputes. For example, the government could easily declare 79% of workers in a specific bargaining unit essential, deny arbitration and force the other 21% to strike.

**DISCRIMINATORY CONSERVATIVE BILL C-377 Threatens to Impose Extreme and Invasive Financial Disclosure on Canadian Unions**

**T**he federal Conservative government has shown that they have a clear agenda to weaken and dismantle Unions with their proposal of an amendment to Income Tax Bill C-377. The new amendment seeks to impose extreme financial disclosure on all Canadian unions and locals requiring labour organizations to submit over 24 detailed financial statements (including cumulative transactions above \$5,000) to the Ministry annually. Under jurisdiction of the new amendment, any financial transactions made by Unions would be posted for public viewing on the Canadian Revenue Agency website.

This Bill is unnecessary and invasive. Financial information within a Union is already made available to members. The Bill additionally proves to be discriminatory as corporations, political parties, charities, and other groups are not obliged to follow the same guidelines. In fact, the Globe and Mail recently

We are **ALL** Affected

Bill C-4 would change language in rules around worker safety. Workers would only be allowed to refuse work if danger is considered "imminent." Following the language of the new worker safety rules, a worker would not be able to reject work in a building containing dangerous levels of asbestos. In order for an employee to refuse work, the risk of danger would have to be immediate (ie. a building fire). In addition, ultimate safety decisions would be left to the Federal Minister of Labour as opposed to Independent Labour Officers. The Minister would likely delegate responsibilities to his/her political appointees.

Finally, the Bill would prevent federal public employees from accessing the Canadian Human Rights Commission and Tribunal over workplace discrimination complaints. Any worker facing discrimination would have to bring the issue directly to their employer. This creates another unfair scenario for employees, as the employer could easily dismiss the worker's complaint based on any number of reasons - that the complaint may be too trivial, frivolous, vexatious or made in bad faith.

*"This Bill is unnecessary and invasive. Financial information within the Union is already made available to members."*

Invasion of privacy is another main issue of concern. If passed, Bill C-377 would invade the privacy of over 12 million Canadians including any businesses that provide their services to labour organizations.

The Bill arguably undermines fundamental rights and freedoms. Bill C-377 undermines our rights to freedom of association, freedom of expression, political rights, rights to confidentiality, personal and commercial privacy as well as solicitor privilege - not to mention it will prove to be a costly venture with Unions and the Canadian Revenue Agency forced to deal with mountains of unnecessary paperwork; the venture seems to be a bit hypocritical considering the Conservative government has been cutting back on other valuable services and jobs to save cash.

The Senate refused to pass the Bill in June 2013 and sent it back to the House of Commons with major amendments. However, the Conservative government completely dismissed the Senate's suggestions recently sending the Bill back in its original form to be dealt with