



**GREATER VANCOUVER
BOARD OF TRADE**

Greater Vancouver Board of Trade
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May 22, 2026

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.,
Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal
Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario
Via electronic mail: MinistrePT-LPMinister@labour-travail.gc.ca

The Honourable John Zerucelli, P.C., M.P.,
Secretary of State for Labour
Via electronic mail: john.zerucelli@parl.gc.ca

Employment and Social Development Canada
Via electronic mail: esdc.nc.labour.consultations-travail.nc.edsc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca

**RE: Building Canada Strong for All Labour Consultation
Submission**

Dear Minister Hajdu and Secretary of State Zerucelli,

On behalf of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade (GVBOT) and our 5,500 members across the Greater Vancouver region, we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Government of Canada's consultation to strengthen Canada's labour framework. This consultation is timely, and the need to act is urgent given our economic challenges and the broader geopolitical environment.

Without a stable labour framework, particularly in federally regulated sectors that underpin our national supply chains, Canada will not be able to deliver on our national priorities such as trade diversification, investing in sovereignty, and economic growth. Our nation's capacity is directly related to the strength of its West Coast gateways. Approximately one quarter of our entire country's traded goods flow through the ports in Western Canada, and the value of goods exported from Western Canada via rail, air, and ship is \$247 billion. Over 80% of exports moving through the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority are destined for non-U.S. markets, underscoring their importance to Canada's global competitiveness. Vancouver's role as a hub for cargo is growing with record volumes in 2025.

Labour disruptions in federally regulated sectors, including ports, rail, and air transportation, have system-wide consequences in Canada. Due to the country's geography and industrial structure, there are often no viable alternatives when key transportation nodes shut down. This affects the movement of goods and people, with wide-reaching impacts across both trade and tourism.

Even brief disruptions can have immediate and outsized impacts on exporters, manufacturers, healthcare providers, and communities, with significant economic consequences. For example, one day of rail stoppage results in three to five days of recovery to resume normal operations, in addition to lost business opportunities. The 2025 Industrial Inquiry Commission on West Coast Ports (IIC report) notes that even short-term disruptions can result in long-term consequences, with cargo permanently diverted to U.S. ports.

Between 2023 and 2024, West Coast ports experienced 24 days of labour-related shutdowns within a 16-month period, disrupting approximately \$19.2 billion in cargo and placing up to \$800 million per day in trade at risk. Clearly, the status quo is not working.

The consequences of these disruptions extend far beyond ports or railways: the shutdowns eroded Canada's reputation as a reliable and trustworthy trading partner on a global scale. This instability ultimately results in increased costs for Canadians and less traffic flowing through our ports, which directly harms the Government's ambition to double non-U.S. trade by 2035. To reach these objectives, it is critical that trade networks are resilient and reliable. When strikes take hold, the economic effects are substantial.

The GVBOT believes that the best and most durable labour deals are made at the bargaining table. However, there have been many instances where nationally significant transportation and trade networks have been shut down due to the parties' inability to reach a deal. In these instances, we believe that the federal government needs a full suite of tools in its toolkit to support and enable successful outcomes in the national interest.

The IIC report provides clear evidence of challenges with the composition of the bargaining units and other factors that make effective collective bargaining difficult.

Recommendations

We strongly recommend that the Government of Canada incorporate the following measures into its labour modernization efforts:

1. Develop New Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Canada needs stronger, proactive mechanisms to resolve labour disputes before they escalate into work stoppages that cripple the national economy. These new mechanisms should be available to all federally regulated sectors that are critical to Canada's economy. This will support objectives such as trade diversification, increased trade within Canada, and major project development.

2. Enable Geographic Certification

In alignment with the IIC, we recommend amending the Canada Labour Code to allow employers, the Minister of Labour, or the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to initiate proceedings for geographic certification under section 34.

This would establish a unified bargaining structure across West Coast ports, similar to other jurisdictions, and mitigate the risk of fragmented, enterprise-level bargaining while providing predictability for workers, employers, and supply chain users.

Importantly, this approach preserves collective bargaining rights while enabling a structured, transparent CIRB process. The IIC emphasized that this reform would not impose an outcome but would enable a CIRB-led process that respects collective bargaining rights while improving system-wide stability.

3. Creation of a Special Mediator

We further recommend amendments to include the creation of mediator provisions to assist parties in successful negotiations, consistent with the IIC's findings and applicable to all federally regulated industries.

Canada is at a pivotal moment. We believe that the recommendations above will support workers, employers, and the Canadian economy and public broadly. With intense global competition and shifting trade dynamics, our ability to deliver goods, attract investment, and grow our economy will depend heavily on the strength and stability of our labour framework. Canada must send a clear signal to investors, trading partners, and businesses that our transportation networks will function reliably.

The Government's consultation presents an important opportunity to modernize the Canada Labour Code in a way that supports workers, protects the national interest, and strengthens Canada's global competitiveness. We urge the Government to act and modernize the Canada Labour Code to prevent repeated paralysis of critical transportation systems and protect our national supply chains.

Sincerely,



Bridgitte Anderson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Greater Vancouver Board of Trade

CC:

The Hon. Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons

The Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions

The Hon. Maninder Sidhu, Minister of International Trade

The Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs, Internal Trade and One Canadian Economy

The Hon. Gregor Robertson, Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada, MP for Vancouver Fraserview—South Burnaby, B.C.

The Hon. Jill McKnight, Minister of Veterans Affairs, MP for Delta, B.C.

The Hon. Randeep Sarai, Secretary of State (International Development), MP for Surrey Centre, B.C.

The Hon. Stephen Fuhr, Secretary of State for Defence, MP for Kelowna, B.C.

The Hon. Stephanie McLean, Secretary of State (Seniors), MP for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, B.C.

Parm Bains, MP for Richmond East—Steveston, B.C.

The Hon. Terry Beech, MP for Burnaby North—Seymour, B.C.

Wade Chang, MP for Burnaby Central, B.C.

Sukh Dhaliwal, MP for Surrey Newton, B.C.

The Hon. Hedy Fry, MP for Vancouver Centre, B.C.

Wade Grant, MP for Vancouver Quadra, B.C.

Will Greaves, MP for Victoria, B.C.

Ernie Klassen, MP for South Surrey—White Rock, B.C.

Ron McKinnon, MP for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, B.C.

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Zoe Royer, MP for Port Moody—Coquitlam, B.C.

Gurbux Saini, MP for Fleetwood—Port Kells, B.C.

Jake Sawatzky, MP for New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville, B.C.

Patrick Weiler, MP for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, B.C.

The Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, MP for North Vancouver—Capilano, B.C.