



Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights

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For immediate release

Potential U.S.-style labour law changes could lead to instability in Saskatchewan workplaces

Ottawa (25 July 2012) – If the Saskatchewan government adopts U.S.-style legislation that has already been found to violate international law, it could lead to labour relations instability and conflict at a time when all parties should be working together to maintain the province's unprecedented economic growth, according to a national labour relations research body.

The Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights (CFLR) has expressed concern over the current review of provincial labour statutes by the Saskatchewan government. In a submission responding to government's *Consultation Paper on the Renewal of Labour Legislation in Saskatchewan*, the CFLR warns about "the risk that sweeping legislative changes may have for labour relations stability in the province."

"Some of the statutory reforms being considered in the consultation paper would result in protracted organizing drives, heightened employer interference, and repetitive de-certification applications," according to the CFLR submission. "Not only would this lead to labour relations uncertainty for employers and unions alike, it would necessarily result in lower unionization rates for Saskatchewan workers," said Paul Champ, CFLR board member and Ottawa-based human rights lawyer.

The CFLR is most critical of suggestions that Saskatchewan should consider implementing legislative changes that allow union members to 'opt out' of paying union dues. "This is modelled after U.S.-style 'right-to-work' laws which legally entrench the problem of 'free riders' – those who receive the benefit of collective bargaining through better wages and working conditions, but do not have to pay for them," said Champ. He noted that in Canada, the compulsory payment of union dues – even by those employees who do not wish to participate in union activities – is a long-established legal principle, known as the Rand formula.

"The Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed that the Rand formula serves three important functions. It prevents 'free riders'; promotes collective activity and union solidarity, as those who pay dues are more likely to participate in union decision-making; and ensures unions have sufficient financial resources to discharge the functions of bargaining and collective agreement administration," added Champ.

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The CFLR identifies several other potential changes that would constitute further violations of workers' rights, which are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as international law.

"Many of the changes suggested for consideration by the consultation paper are either directly antagonistic towards unions and workers' rights and freedoms, or reflect a lack of knowledge about the democratic character of unions as organizations," according to Champ. "This goes against Saskatchewan's long tradition of respecting and promoting rights for working people," he said.

[CFLR](#) is a national organization devoted to creating public awareness and understanding of the history and role of labour rights as an important means to strengthen democracy, equality and economic justice. Members of the CFLR Board of Directors are labour relations academics, human rights activists and labour lawyers from across Canada.

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More information:

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[The Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights submission on *Consultation Paper on the Renewal of Labour Legislation in Saskatchewan*](#)

[CFLR web site – www.labourrights.ca](#)

CFLR

The Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights (CFLR) is a national voice devoted to promoting labour rights as an important means to strengthening democracy, equality and economic justice here in Canada and internationally. The key objectives the Foundation has established for itself are to create greater public awareness and understanding of labour rights as a key critical component of human rights; build effective political momentum and public support for progressive labour law reform.
CFLR