



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Bill C-257, prohibiting the use of replacement workers

THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS WINS ANOTHER VICTORY DESPITE CONSERVATIVE OBSTRUCTION

Ottawa, Monday, February 19, 2007 – The Bloc Québécois anti-strikebreaker bill has succeeded in making it through the committee stage. Bill C-257 will thus be returning to the House of Commons for debate at Third Reading. “The Bloc Québécois has completed an essential and difficult stage in the process of getting a bill passed to forbid the hiring of replacement workers during labour conflicts in sectors regulated by the Canada Labour Code,” said the Bloc Québécois Labour Critic and MP for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, **Carole Lavallée**.

The proceedings in committee were punctuated by attempts at foot-dragging by the Conservatives, who did everything in their power to derail consideration of the Bill. This did not surprise **Carole Lavallée**, who pointed out that while Jean-Pierre Blackburn had been in favour of legislation of this kind in 1990, he had since launched an unprecedented fear campaign, going so far as to make the irresponsible assertion that with this kind of legislation everything would be “paralyzed”.

Although C-257 is no concern of theirs (since less than 1% of bank employees are unionized), the Canadian Bankers Association attacked the Bill fiercely, claiming that it could have “business and/or consumer impacts of a national scope”. Other employer representatives and employer groups from such sectors as ports and airports, rail transport and telecommunications, also put forward unjustified fears, even though most of them hire specialized personnel who need lengthy training and are thus impossible to replace at a moment’s notice.

The Bloc Québécois countered all this hand-wringing by citing the experience of Quebec, which has had similar legislation for the past 30 years without any economic catastrophe, business paralysis, or calamity in health care or education. As **Carole Lavallée** pointed out, Quebec statistics show that many more person-days are lost to labour conflicts in federally-regulated jurisdictions than in Quebec.

Quebec’s experience clearly proves that prohibiting the use of strikebreakers in sectors regulated by the Quebec Labour Code has helped to establish and maintain balanced negotiations and make possible amicable returns to work. Labour conflicts are significantly shorter in Quebec, and since the passage of its anti-strikebreaker bill in 1977, the number of labour conflicts there has plunged, from 293 in 1976 to 76 in 2005.

Richard Nadeau, MP for Gatineau, who signed and introduced the bill in May 2006, concluded by declaring how delighted he was by its progress. “It will enable unionized workers under federal jurisdiction to have a more equal relationship with their employers,” he said, “experience shorter conflicts, and return to work more smoothly and productively.”

– 30 –

Information:

Catherine Bourgault, Media Relations Officer
Bloc Québécois Caucus
tel.: 613 947-2495
cell: 613 296-1041
www.blocquebecois.org