



PRESS RELEASE

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Bloc Québécois anti-strikebreaker bill

CAROLE LAVALLÉE CALLS UPON THE MINISTER TO FACE REALITY

Ottawa, Wednesday, June 7, 2006 – As the Bloc Québécois anti-strikebreaker bill passes second reading this week, the Bloc Québécois labour critic and member for Saint-Bruno--Saint-Hubert, **Carole Lavallée**, is disappointed by the attitude of the Minister of Labour, Jean-Pierre Blackburn. The Member is nevertheless convinced that this new initiative, the tenth one by the Bloc Québécois to introduce anti-strikebreaker provisions, will succeed. Never before, she noted after the Minister's appearance before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, has the Bloc Québécois garnered such broad and strong support among labour representatives for such a bill.

"I am surprised by the arguments put forward by Minister Blackburn to denigrate the bill currently on the table. These arguments draw on studies by the Montreal Economic Institute and the Fraser Institute, which are both well to the right on the political spectrum and have repeatedly shown their values to be very different from Quebecers' values," noted the Member with respect to the bill's introduction by fellow MP for Gatineau, **Richard Nadeau**.

"The study by the Montreal Economic Institute concluded by saying that Quebec and British Columbia should withdraw the protection they provide to workers under their respective legislation. Such a statement runs counter to the trend around the world. In fact, North America is somewhat behind in the protection of workers' rights compared to European countries," continued **Carole Lavallée**.

The Minister argued that where strikebreaker legislation is in place, the investment rate is 25% below what it is in provinces without this legislation. This figure is contradicted however by the statistics on growth in Quebec. The Member stated that European countries have no fear of investing in Quebec since the National Assembly adopted such provisions as part of Quebec's labour code. In 2002 for instance, Quebec accounted for 77% of Canadian jobs with the subsidiaries of French companies, while it accounted for 37% of jobs with British firms, 35% with German firms and 27% with American companies.

The Member noted finally that not only do the studies cited by the Minister come from pro-employer organizations, but the figures presented are based on disputes in very large corporations only, and during the period from 1967 to 1999. **Carole Lavallée** maintained that these figures are biased and possibly even outdated. “These figures are even more questionable considering that Quebec’s economy is primarily based on small and medium sized businesses,” she argued.

“Everyone in the field except the Minister apparently recognizes the importance of this step for workers subject to the Canada Labour Code. The anti-strikebreaker legislation adopted in Quebec in 1977 represents a major stride forward for workers’ rights under Quebec’s labour code and this initiative marked a major change and high point in employer/employee relations in Quebec,” stated **Carole Lavallée**.

“Experience has clearly shown that using replacement workers tends in general to considerably extend the duration of conflicts, exacerbating tensions. Employers and employees alike are hurt by these draw-out labour disputes. It is in the interest of all parties to resolve disputes quickly, and banning strikebreakers will contribute greatly to this. The determination to win is palpable among our partners and in the Bloc Québécois. That is why I am personally convinced that we will make it this time. Quebec accepted this reality a long time ago and the Minister and his government must also accept it,” concluded **Carole Lavallée**.

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