



**Secret Ballots Essential for Worker Rights**  
*Merit Canada disappointed the Federal Government is repealing worker freedoms*

(OTTAWA) January 28, 2016: Merit Canada expressed disappointment today that the Federal Government is introducing legislation to repeal secret ballot voting rights for workers in federally-regulated sectors, a right that was only granted in December 2014 with the passage of Bill C-525 by Parliament.

“We recognize this is a platform commitment from the new Liberal Government and respect their right to repeal this legislation. However, we feel it is a step backwards for workers’ rights in Canada,” stated Terrance Oakey, President of Merit Canada.

“It also comes at a time when one would expect Parliament’s attention to be focused on the economic challenges facing the country, which are far more important to workers than repealing a right they strongly support,” added Oakey.

Under the system implemented with Bill C-525, union organizers have to get expressions of support from 40% of workers in federally-regulated sectors in order to force a vote on union certification. That vote is then held by secret ballot. If a majority of those who vote support joining the union, then certification proceeds.

If the legislation introduced today is passed by Parliament, it means Canada will revert to the old system, in which a workplace can be unionized if a union provides the Labour Board with cards it claims have been signed by employees representing 50% +1 of the target workplace, a system Merit Canada believes is ripe for intimidation and manipulation.

“The decision to join a union is a deeply personal one that should be free from intimidation by union organizers or company owners. That can only be guaranteed by a secret ballot. There is a reason secret ballots are one of the hallmarks upon which our whole democratic system is based,” added Oakey.

Six provinces currently employ secret ballots for union certification. A Leger Marketing poll found over 80% of workers support secret ballot votes on unionization. Workers in federally-regulated sectors will now lose that right, which union leaders have always opposed.

“It still seems bizarre that union leaders oppose granting workers a secret ballot on certification, when they themselves are elected by that same process. Democratic principles are not a buffet from which you pick and choose depending on the day and your mood. They should be protected for all workers at all times,” concluded Oakey.

**About Merit Canada**

Merit Canada is the national voice of Canada’s eight provincial Open Shop construction associations. Open Shop companies and workers build more than 70% of the industrial, commercial/institutional, and residential construction projects coast to coast to coast. As of June 2011, the Canadian construction sector employed 1.26 million Canadians with 900,000 working in the “open shop” sector.

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