

January 9, 2026

VIA EMAIL

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1A 0A6
Email: melanie.joly@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Joly,

Re: Informing Canada's Aerospace and Defence Industrial Strategy

At a moment of profound change for Canada's defence partnerships, industrial policy, and national security priorities we are writing to you on behalf of Unifor and our members in the aerospace sector. We are closely monitoring developments on procurement of fighter aircraft and government's efforts to align investment in the sector with a broader industrial strategy. Given our vested interest in the outcome of your ministry's decisions, we are requesting a meeting to discuss priorities for the sector.

Unifor is the largest private sector union representing more than 320,000 members nationwide, and 11,000 aerospace workers employed across the full value chain, including manufacturing, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), avionics, simulation, composites, propulsion, and advanced systems. Our members are present in every major aerospace cluster in the country, including Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia, and Atlantic Canada, they are at the heart of Canada's aerospace capabilities in both civil, defence and space markets.

You have been unflinching in your support for Canada's industrial sectors, at a time of severe trade uncertainty and economic headwinds. We thank you for your leadership. As you review Canada's defense partnerships, and explore growth opportunities for Canadian aerospace, we want to share with you a series of Unifor recommendations relevant to your ministry's work on defence policy and procurement. The recommendations were developed through extensive consultations with our members in aerospace and other stakeholders, they are accessible in their entirety aerounifor.ca

A dedicated aerospace sector strategy

As a key sector and one of critical importance to our national security, aerospace requires a stand-alone sector strategy that supports long-term industrial continuity, innovation, and workforce stability. Aerospace is a uniquely strategic sector, part civil, part military, and deeply integrated into global supply chains. A defence strategy alone is insufficient to address the diversity and needs within the broader sector.

An inclusive Aerospace Industry Development Council

Unifor strongly recommends the creation of a permanent Aerospace Industry Development Council, with a formal and structured voice for workers, alongside industry, academia and governments. Such a forum would allow Canada to continuously revisit, calibrate, and adapt its aerospace strategy in response to market shifts, technological change, and geopolitical realities. This council would allow for cooperation, and flexibility in responding to quickly changing circumstances, whether they be political or economic in nature.

Strengthening the Industrial and Technological Benefits (ITB) program

While ITBs remain an essential policy tool, Unifor is concerned that indirect benefit spending too often fails to meaningfully support the aerospace ecosystem, particularly Tier-2 and Tier-3 suppliers and high-value manufacturing jobs. The ITB framework should be strengthened to ensure greater industrial additionality, workforce impacts, and domestic capability development.

Demand-oriented strategic aerospace procurement

Wherever and whenever possible, Canada should pursue demand-oriented aerospace procurement strategies that leverage Canadian industry, intellectual property, and skilled labour across defence, space, and civil security applications such as wildfire monitoring and response. Strategic procurement must be used not only to acquire capability, but to protect and grow good Canadian aerospace jobs.

Impose conditions on firms receiving public supports to maximize benefits to Canada's economy

Government must consider imposing conditions on corporate support to ensure companies deliver maximum benefits to Canadian workers and our national economy. Conditions must also include union neutrality requirements, job security and long-term domestic production commitments, transition guarantees for the current workforce to ensure training and support for workers whose jobs are going through a transition process, among others. We've seen the effects of economic instability and impacts on Canadian jobs, with protectionist policies on the rise in the United States, Canada, too, must ensure its key sectors and employment are protected.

Last, but certainly, not least is our most valued competitive advantage, our workforce. Labour shortages are at critical levels; an aerospace strategy must allocate investments for aerospace training facilities across the country, developed in collaboration with provinces. Canada's ability to ensure workforce renewal, upskilling, and technological readiness depends on these investments.

Unifor and our members are deeply invested in the future of Canada's aerospace sector. The government's clear intent to protect, anchor, and grow aerospace jobs in Canada is reassuring and Unifor shares that commitment fully.

We also view the recent investment in the Global 6500 platform under the *Airlift Capability Project - Multi-Role Flight Service* as a step in the right direction, demonstrating how strategic procurement can support Canadian industrial capacity while meeting critical operational needs. These decisions mark common ground, and we stand ready to collaborate on building a strong and resilient aerospace sector with workers at the centre of it.

We look forward to hearing from you soon to arrange a meeting to discuss how government, industry, and workers can work together to secure Canada's aerospace future.

Sincerely,



Lana Payne
National President, Unifor



Daniel Cloutier
Québec Director

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Cc: David McGuinty, Minister of National Defence
Joël Lightbound, Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement
Stephen Fuhr, Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)
John Zerucelli, Secretary of State (Labour)