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**LEN POIRIER**  
*National Secretary-Treasurer*  
*Secrétaire-trésorier national*

**LANA PAYNE**  
*National President*  
*Présidente nationale*

**DANIEL CLOUTIER**  
*Quebec Director*  
*Directeur québécois*

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December 8, 2022

By email

The Honourable Blaine Higgs  
Premier of New Brunswick  
Chancery Place, P. O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, NB, Canada, E3B 5H1

**Re: Bill-23 and the attack on workers in New Brunswick**

Dear Premier Higgs,

I am writing to express Unifor's concerns over *Bill-23, An Act to Amend the Public Service Labour Relations Act*. We see Bill-23 as an attack on all workers in the province of New Brunswick – in both the public and private sector – and Unifor and our allies respectfully demand that your government withdraw the proposed legislation immediately.

New Brunswickers are facing a series of escalating crises: our healthcare system is on the verge of collapse, our education system is struggling, and the spiralling cost of living is making it almost impossible for working families to make ends meet.

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector, with more than 315,000 members working in every major sector of the Canadian economy. Our union represents almost 7,000 members in New Brunswick, working for employers such as J.D Irving, Bell Canada, Old Dutch Foods, Loblaw, Hilton Hotels, and AV Nackawic Inc., just to name a few. Good union jobs like these are a vital part of New Brunswick's economy, and our members work hard to support their families and communities.

While our members in New Brunswick work mostly in the private sector, we know all too well the critical role public sector workers play in the province. Teachers, nurses, and

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government workers help educate our children, keep us safe and healthy, and deliver important social services. Simply put, without public sector workers, the province of New Brunswick and its economy would grind to a halt.

This is one of the reasons why we were so shocked and dismayed when Minister Holder introduced Bill-23 in the Legislative Assembly just a few weeks ago. Bill-23 represents an unnecessary and ill-conceived weakening of fundamental labour rights for public sector workers in New Brunswick.

In May 2021, Unifor released a discussion paper called [Fairness on the line: The case for anti-scab legislation in Canada](#). In that paper, we laid out the case that strong and fair anti-scab legislation that bans the use of scabs during both legal strikes and lockouts will help lead to shorter labour disputes, safer workplaces, and less acrimonious and conflict-ridden picket lines. While we are encouraged that the federal government is rolling out legislation that will help promote normalized labour relations, we are deeply concerned that the government of New Brunswick is trying to take us *backwards*.

The best place for labour disputes to be resolved is at the bargaining table, with both parties engaged in good faith bargaining with the shared goal of settling a fair deal. Bill-23 will tip the scales in favour of the employer – in this case, the provincial government – and this deliberate imbalance will invariably lead to increased labour strife and disruption.

New Brunswick's public sector is struggling with a severe labour shortage, and making these jobs *worse* by undermining labour standards will only exacerbate the problem. If anything, the provincial government should be investing in the public sector and improving the quality of public sector jobs, a strategy that would improve public services for all New Brunswickers and create better jobs that would attract workers and further stimulate the provincial economy.

Along with the rest of the labour movement and our allies, Unifor has been fighting back against the Conservative-led anti-worker agenda across the country. Most recently in Ontario, we celebrated the [double victory of the repeal of Bill 28](#), the Ford government's attempt to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause and impose an inferior contract on education workers, and [the overturning of Bill 124](#), the Ford government's unconstitutional wage suppression legislation for the public sector.

In both these cases, the labour movement – backed by our allies and a deeply outraged public – was prepared to do anything it takes to see justice for public sector workers. We are hopeful that a similar conflict can be prevented in New Brunswick, if your government withdraws Bill 23 immediately.

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Unifor's 7,000 members in the province – and indeed, our 315,000 members across Canada – are prepared to do whatever it takes to support our family, friends and neighbours working in New Brunswick's public sector.

Sincerely,



**Jennifer Murray**

Atlantic Regional Director, Unifor

**CC:** New Brunswick Labour Union Leaders, Members of Legislative Assembly, Members of Parliament, City Mayors, and others.