

March 30, 2023

SENT VIA EMAIL jonathan.wilkinson@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Natural Resources
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

Re: Windsor Salt Labour Dispute

On behalf of Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union, I am writing to you about a labour dispute that is impacting one of the largest salt producers in Canada. More than 250 members of Unifor Locals 240 and 1959 working at the Windsor salt mine and evaporation plant have been on strike for nearly six weeks now, since February 17th.

Windsor Salt, one of Canada's oldest and largest salt manufacturers, was acquired in 2021 by California-based Stone Canyon Industries. Stone Canyon is a private holding company that has been actively buying up salt companies around the world and its SCI Salt division is now one of the largest salt producers in the world. The company has cornered the North American salt market to such an extent that the U.S. Justice Department forced it to divest one of its subsidiaries, US Salt, before closing the deal that included the acquisition of Windsor Salt. According to the Justice Department, Stone Canyon's proposed merger would have led to "to higher prices and lower quality for consumers."¹

The acquisition deal that led to the purchase of Windsor Salt also transferred control over a substantial portion of Canada's salt supplies. In addition to Windsor Salt's various mines and salt plants across the country, Stone Canyon owns NSC Minerals, a Saskatchewan-based bulk salt supplier, as well as Ontario-based Kissner Milling Company, which manufactures and distributes ice melt.

Minister, I have to emphasize that there is a direct correlation between Stone Canyon's outsized market power and their negotiation strategies, and I raise this as I believe the Government of Canada should be concerned. Their aggressive approach to cornering the North American salt market mirrors their strategy at the bargaining table where they

¹ <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/stone-canyon-required-divest-us-salt-acquire-morton-salt>

began their very first round of bargaining with Unifor Locals 240 and 1959 by demanding unacceptable concessions.

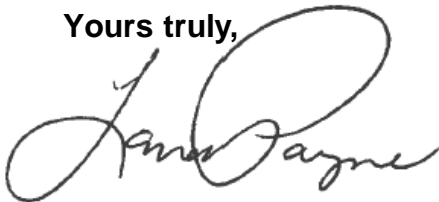
In particular, Stone Canyon refused to discuss any financial matters until the locals agreed to the outsourcing of union labour – a move which could effectively open the door to significant layoffs and the end of union representation.

Simply put, this was a strike that no one wanted, but one which Windsor Salt workers were compelled to undertake given the existential threat to their job security and their union. While the unwavering resolve of Local 240 and 1959 has forced Stone Canyon into softening its stonewalling strategy, the employer continues to push for significant concessions around contracting out and job security.

Unifor members, however, continue to be hopeful that a fair agreement will be reached. With the support of the broader community behind them, the workers of Windsor Salt recognize that fighting for a just deal now means securing a better economic future for Windsor in the coming generations. I don't need to explain to you the economic importance of a salt mine that has been in continuous operation since the 1950s and which is expected to remain viable until at least 2063.

I hope the federal government shares with us the view that Windsor Salt workers deserve a fair deal and that respect for the collective bargaining process entails open participation in negotiations without setting undue preconditions. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter in greater detail, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lana Payne', written in a cursive style.

LANA PAYNE
National President

LP/bmkcope343

cc The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Labour, Seamus.Oregan@parl.gc.ca