

December 22, 2017

chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Freeland,

I write today to share my concerns about proposed amendments to Mexican labour law that are detrimental to worker's rights, collective bargaining, and freedom of association.

On December 7, 2017 Mexican Senators Isaías González Cuevas and Tereso Medina Ramírez, affiliated with the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), introduced reforms to the Federal Labour Law described as the strongest blow to the Mexican working class in a hundred years.

At a time when NAFTA renegotiations seek to create a level playing field across North America by raising both wages and working conditions in Mexico, these regressive reforms would knock labour standards further back while virtually wipe out the positive changes to the Mexican Constitution achieved earlier this year.

Just last month I stood on the ground where two striking Mexican workers were shot to death while picketing near a mine owned by Canada's Torex Gold. It was a sobering reminder of the peril that Mexican workers face when they advocate for their rights. To allow those rights to be eroded further is unconscionable.

Unifor has long maintained that the system in Mexico is skewed against free and democratic unions, as government sanctioned protection contracts are signed with employer-dominated unions without the approval, or even knowledge, of the workers.

The new proposals dramatically weaken recently adopted provisions to allow workers to access information on groups that claim to represent them and to obtain agreements that have been signed with employers. If adopted the new legislation would not only mean that the majority of Mexican workers covered by a collective agreement would not have access to a copy, it would also remove a requirement that workers approve the collective agreement before implementation.

Additionally, the proposal eliminates all restrictions on subcontracting, previously established in 2012 reforms to the Federal Labour Law, further increasing the level of precarious work.

In short, these proposals create insurmountable obstacles to workers' right of association and collective bargaining of trade unions, while shielding "charro" unions and corporate profits.

Time and time again, we have witnessed international corporations' side-step responsibility and hide behind the fact that they are following the law of the land. Allowing Mexico to further destroy the basis of fundamental labor law would prevent workers from exercising their fundamental rights while simultaneously reducing the cost of Mexican labour, further jeopardizing good paying jobs for all North American workers.

Any new NAFTA deal must hinge on moving Mexican labour laws forward to safeguard worker's rights and raise standards to help eliminate the outsourcing of Canadian jobs. We cannot reach a fair and balanced trade agreement if Mexico is allowed to employ a system that exploits workers and violates the core principles of international labour standards.

On behalf of Unifor's 315,000 members across Canada I urge you to raise strenuous objection to these proposed labour law amendments with the Mexican government, and to be prepared to refuse any NAFTA agreement without guaranteed protection of workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerry Dias".

JERRY DIAS
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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