

May 23, 2019

**Preparations Intensify for Mass Family Solidarity March
with Locked-Out ABI Workers**

**All Out to Make the May 25 March in
Trois-Rivières a Grand Success!**



Trois-Rivières

Saturday, May 25 -- 10:30 am

Outside the Cogeco Amphitheatre at 100 Draveurs Avenue

For information and buses from across Quebec, [click here](#).

Steelworkers in District 6 (Ontario and Atlantic Provinces) interested in organizing buses to Trois-Rivières, contact Tony DePaulo at the district office: 416-243-8792 or d6@usw.ca

- **ABI Workers Mobilize Public Opinion to Support Their Just Cause**
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Vale Breaks Off Contract Talks with Steelworkers at Voisey's Bay in Labrador

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- **Working Conditions at Toronto's Pearson Airport Must Improve!**

Preparations Intensify for Mass Family Solidarity March with Locked-Out ABI Workers

All Out to Make the May 25 March in Trois-Rivières a Grand Success!



ABI workers and allies demonstrated in the streets of Pittsburgh on May 8, 2019 where Alcoa's annual meeting of shareholders was being held.

Enthusiasm continues to mount amongst workers and their allies as the mass solidarity march for ABI locked out workers draws closer. Through our own efforts and unity in action let us make the march in Trois-Rivières this Saturday, May 25 at 10:30 am a significant event in defence of the working class and its rights!

The United Steelworkers report that preparations are going well. Many workers and people from different walks of life have already registered by reserving their seats on buses being provided by the Quebec Federation of Labour (FTQ). The buses will depart from several Quebec cities with contingents of workers having registered from as far away as Chibougamau in Northern Quebec, Rouyn-Noranda in Abitibi and various places on the North Shore.

The Ontario Steelworkers have announced their participation in the march. They have faced similar intransigence and dictate of the global monopolies that refuse to negotiate acceptable arrangements with their workers along with state-organized repressive measures such as court-ordered injunctions to deny effective picketing and bankruptcies to seize workers' pensions. They have organized buses to make the journey to Trois-Rivières and report bus seat reservations continue to come in with others planning to car pool.

As the event is family-oriented, the march itself will last about an hour to be followed by a lunch with hot dogs. This will allow people to socialize in a convivial atmosphere and engage in

discussion as to the way forward for the working class in the face of the state-supported global power of the financial oligarchy.

For more information on the march or to book seats on a bus, [click here](#).

(Photos: *Metallös*)



ABI Workers Mobilize Public Opinion to Support Their Just Cause



ABI workers and their allies are continuing their efforts to explain to everyone their conflict with Alcoa/Rio Tinto and to mobilize financial and other support for their struggle. In the battle to lift the lockout and reach an acceptable collective agreement, the ABI workers and their union USW Local 9700 are reaching out to all working people, youth and students to assist them.

On May 15, a representative of ABI workers spoke at a conference organized in Brussels, Belgium by the IndustriALL Global Union. He presented the chronology of the conflict and explained the need for the support of all workers in these terms: "After 16 months of conflict, we are reaching out for help. We need to step up the level of pressure on these global companies. Not only are they intent on impoverishing us, they are also demanding major concessions. [...] The pressure should not be on the workers. It's time for us to unite and exert pressure of equal force. This conflict has created an incredible wave of solidarity. Without that solidarity we would not be here today. This is due in large part to financial support, which has allowed us to remain strong."

A delegation of ABI workers spoke at the Canadian Union of Public Employees' (CUPE) Quebec Convention held May 14-17. Directly from the floor, close to \$200,000 was raised, to be shared between ABI workers and the University of Montreal's Maintenance Employees' Union (CUPE) presently on strike.

Over recent weeks, ABI workers have received financial and other support from many unions with some increasing the amounts they were already providing. Additional support has arrived from

several sections of the Quebec Union of Public and Parapublic Employees (SFPQ), the Alliance of Professional and Technical Personnel in Health and Social Services (APTS), several Unifor locals, and Steelworkers from Matagami in North-of-Quebec and Fermont on the North Shore.

The fight of ABI workers is our fight. Let us go all out to affirm our solidarity with their just cause by spreading the word that the working class must stand together in the face of the financial oligarchy and its political representatives. Continue to gather financial support for the ABI workers locked out from their aluminum smelter, and participate in large numbers in the family solidarity march on Saturday, May 25 in Trois-Rivières.

(Photos: WF)



We All Have Common Cause with the ABI Workers

- André Jacob, Director, Education and Organization, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Quebec Region -



Locked-out ABI workers rally at Quebec National Assembly March 27, 2019.

The struggle of the ABI workers must be supported because the unions are being attacked by the political class and the people in power who run the economy. For example, with regard to CUPW, we are continuously under special legislation. The unions are left with their hands tied, where they can no longer manoeuvre because their rights are denied through legislative provisions. That is what we are experiencing.

In the case of ABI, you have an employer who can take a position because the main, economic cost of that position is borne by the Quebec government. It is us Quebeckers who are footing the bill for ABI's electricity contract. When I went to the demonstration in front of the National Assembly with the workers of ABI, that was the issue at hand and Premier Legault is clearly not willing to take up his responsibility. In addition, Alcoa is a global empire, so it can have its aluminum produced elsewhere while we pay it to continue the lockout.



As for CUPW, we are under special legislation, which prevents us from undertaking pressure tactics, and our ongoing arbitration is constantly being postponed. It is May now and we have just learned that it has been postponed until December. We began our job actions in October 2018; then in November the government passed back-to-work legislation preventing us from waging job actions. As soon as a CUPW member would undertake a job action against Canada Post that affected mail delivery, we were hit with a fine of \$50,000 a day, per member. We no longer have the right to undertake pressure tactics; our issues have been dragging on over time. That is where it becomes important to have other unions come out and assist and undertake job actions, as was the case with us.

As for the ABI workers, they have been locked out for sixteen months. In such a long fight, the financial aspect becomes very important. We gave them money and often had the union president come to our locals to explain where the conflict was at. Our locals participate in their picket lines. It is important, as there is no limit to the support we can provide them.

We must reinforce our union strength and fight for each other.

(Translated from original French by Workers' Forum. Photos: WF, Metallos.)



Vale Breaks Off Contract Talks with Steelworkers at Voisey's Bay in Labrador

Company Refuses to Address Health, Safety and Other Concerns



Workers in Voisey's Bay during their 2009-2010 strike against Vale and its imposition of "final offers" and refusal to bargain at that time.

The United Steelworkers union (USW) reports that the Brazilian mining corporation Vale has broken off contract talks with USW Local 9508. The local represents 250 production and maintenance workers at Vale's Voisey's Bay mining operations in Labrador. The workers have been extracting minerals in an open-pit mine and operating a concentrator since 2005.

Workers at the facility produce two types of concentrate: a nickel-cobalt-copper concentrate and a copper concentrate. The nickel concentrate workers produce at Voisey's Bay is currently transported and processed by another collective of workers at Vale's hydro-metallurgical processing facility in Long Harbour, Newfoundland.

Voisey's Bay is a fly-in/fly-out operation. It includes Impacts and Benefit Agreements (IBAs) with the Nunatsiavut Government representing the Inuit of Labrador, and with the Sheshatshiu First Nation and the Mushuau First Nation representing the Innu, on whose land the ore and mine/mill are located. The IBAs are said to establish specific employment commitments for the Innu and the Inuit, and relations with Indigenous businesses so that they provide the operation with goods and services.

The workers' collective agreement expired on March 31 and Vale broke off contract talks on May 15. Steelworkers report that Vale ended the talks despite the appointment of a provincial conciliation officer to assist in the negotiations. The officer will now submit a report to the province's Labour Minister as part of a process that will see the parties in a legal strike/lockout position within the next few weeks.

"We started bargaining in February and we still haven't been able to get the company to negotiate seriously on any of the key issues," said USW Staff Representative Boyd Bussey.

According to the Steelworkers, Vale has been unwilling to address important issues, such as health and safety concerns that have become even more crucial as the company develops underground mining operations at Voisey's Bay. In 2018, Vale announced it was moving ahead with the construction of an underground mine at the site, extending expected operations by at least 15 years, until 2035. First ore from the underground section is due in 2021.

Steelworkers point out that an underground mine carries additional and different hazards than surface mining, including incidents such as explosions, increased risks from exposure, environmental emergencies and other issues of importance to those who do the work. The fact that Vale has broken off contract talks and refuses to discuss and address health and safety concerns with the workers is unacceptable and does not bode well.

Workers' Forum will follow the situation closely and report on developments, as they indicate a possible pattern of dictate and reckless moves similar to those at play in the lockouts at the ABI smelter owned by the Alcoa/Rio Tinto cartel in Bécancour, Quebec and the Brunswick smelter in Belledune, New Brunswick owned by Glencore.

Vale's refusal to negotiate also brings back memories of the 18-month strike at Voisey's Bay operations that ended in January 2011, during which Vale shamelessly used scores of strike-breaking mercenaries to impose anti-worker concessions on issues such as pensions and wages.



That strike was part of the strike action of Vale Inco workers in Sudbury and Port Colborne, Ontario, where the company used similar provocative strike-breaking tactics to extort anti-worker concessions. The result is that the company seizes an even greater amount of the social wealth workers produce leaving less in the local and regional communities and economies. Meanwhile, its thirst for more is insatiable.

Workers do not want a repeat scenario and are demanding genuine negotiations where they have a decisive say in determining their working conditions, as it is they who do the work in difficult conditions.

(With files from USW website. Photos: Strikeforce 6500.)



Injured Workers Fighting for Their Dignity and Rights

Interview

- Peter Page, Executive Vice-President, Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups -

36th Ontario Injured Workers' Day June 1



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

On the eve of Injured Workers' Day June 1, Workers' Forum spoke to Peter Page, the Executive Vice-President of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) about the concerns and the work of the organization at this time and particularly its campaign "Workers' Comp Is a Right!"

Workers' Forum: What are the main issues you are bringing forward in the "Workers' Comp Is a Right" Campaign, as we approach Injured Workers' Day?

Peter Page: We began our "Workers' Comp Is a Right!" campaign in the fall of 2017. Our goal is to educate and mobilize the public about the right to workers' compensation, as well as to remind our politicians and employers about the historical compromise that led to the compensation system.

The historical compromise was a deal struck between the workers and the employers whereby we gave up our right to sue in exchange for compensation. Basically, if you are injured because of a workplace accident, you must receive compensation for as long as the disability lasts. In exchange, you give up your right to pursue litigation against your employer.



What is happening is that governments and employers are renegeing on this deal. They are not holding up their end of the deal. Workers are still not allowed to sue but employers, government and the workers' compensation system are not providing the benefits for injured workers that they should.

At the moment, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) has a fully funded system, with almost \$40 billion in their bank account and that is growing. There is more than enough money to provide for injured workers. Yet we continue to have our benefits cut through the Board's policy changes.

They create policies, which make it difficult for injured workers to receive compensation, such as "pre-existing conditions," or with things like deeming. Deeming continues to be an issue. Deeming is where the Board takes benefits away from a worker. The Board says either you go out and find a job whether it exists or not, or we will deduct off your present compensation benefits the minimum wage or more, such as whatever we deem you should be able to earn.

We have proof that a lot of injured workers do not return to the workforce. In fact they wind up on something other than workers' compensation such as the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Canada Pension Plan Disability, or income assistance. This is downloading the compensation, which is supposed to be assumed by the employers according to the historical compromise, onto the public treasury of Ontario.



Also, the Board is stalling on many outstanding issues of importance such as the General Electric workers in Peterborough who were exposed for decades to toxic chemicals; the mining workers in Northern Ontario who were forced to inhale MacIntyre Powder, which was supposed to prevent silicosis, but then they died of cancers or other occupational diseases; or many other occupational disease cases.

The Board says it is going to look into GE, review all the claims at GE, but at the end of the day it really does nothing. It allows a few claims to show that something is being done but the number of occupational diseases is increasing. The number of workers being poisoned in the workplace is increasing. The Board does not recognize this. It is protecting the employers and the government while workers are being killed, maimed and poisoned by their employers. The Board and others are now

saying they are doing this to make "Ontario open for business," at the direct cost of the well-being and rights of workers. It is an attack not only on injured workers but on all workers and their rights.

Basically the Board is implementing policies designed to deny injured workers their benefits.

It is underfunding the Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA), which is a component of the workers' compensation system that is there to help injured workers navigate the bureaucracy of the system.

Injured workers now have to navigate the system by themselves. If they are not unionized they have to try to seek help and the waiting time for the OWA can be six, seven, eight months before it even looks at your case.

The WSIB is also making it harder for workers to appeal, to actually get a judgement. Some workers

take five, six, seven, even eight years to receive a ruling from the WSIB. They often win their claim only partially, not fully.

It is all causing a backlog of injured workers who are not receiving the compensation benefits they deserve. And if they are not getting benefits, that money is going into the coffers of the WSIB.

WF: As part of its anti-social offensive against the people of Ontario, the Ford government is moving very fast in its attacks, some of which have a direct impact on injured workers.

PP: Yes. The Ford government has recently cut funding to Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) by 30 per cent. They are lawyers who do a lot of compensation case work. The Ford government has shamefully used immigration as an excuse to cut the funding of LAO saying that the money spent for defending immigrants' rights should be a federal issue and the federal government should pay for it, not the province of Ontario. Because of the cuts to the legal aid community, the lawyers are going to have to prioritize what they can do. They might say that they are going to do a minimal amount of compensation cases as they take too long; it takes up too much of their time. It will become another issue negatively affecting access to justice for injured workers.



The Ford government has cut the budget of the Ministry of Labour's Prevention Office, a \$16 million cut. The government is also cutting the research part of the WSIB from \$8.5 million last year to \$6.8 million this year. This research is done by health and safety organizations or by Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) and is important for the health and safety of workers. The research is particularly important for migrant workers who have to deal with pesticides and various chemicals they use in the industries where they work.

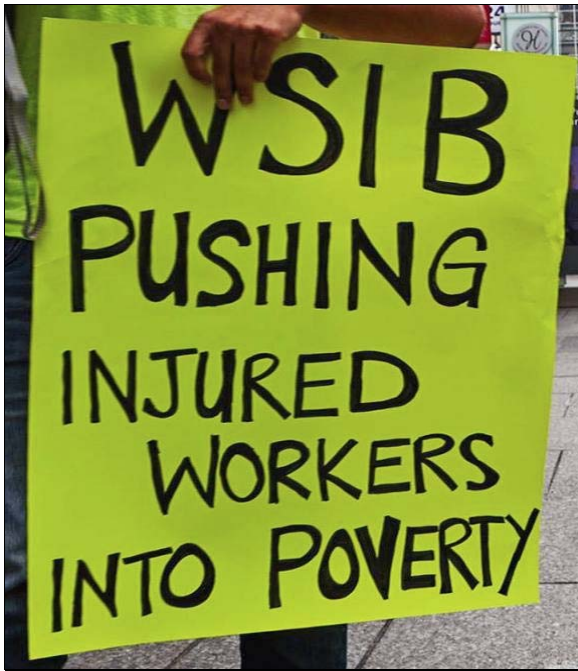
Our rights were slowly eroded by the previous Liberal government and now the Ford government is doing it blatantly and very fast.

WF: What is the thrust of the "Workers' Comp Is a Right Campaign" at this time?

PP: The title of the campaign says it all. We have a right to compensation and a right to be able to live our lives in dignity and not in poverty. Because you went to work and got injured should not mean that you are forced into poverty. So many of our injured workers are being forced onto the welfare system. This means the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and the employers are not meeting their social responsibilities either to injured workers or the public treasury. This is an attack on our rights and goes against the historical compromise that gave rise to the compensation system.

We are fighting all the points of attack upon injured workers I have mentioned. At the same time we are staying within a smaller framework rather than trying to fight every aspect. We are sticking to a few basic demands: "No cuts based on phantom jobs!"; "Listen to injured workers' receiving treatment from healthcare professionals!"; "Stop cutting benefits based on 'pre-existing conditions!'"

We are demanding full compensation for injured workers. We are fighting for justice for all injured workers. We are working to hold the government and the WSIB to account by presenting the truth of what is happening. They have to change these policies that are detrimental to the workers, which may at some point be illegal.



Over the last year we visited many MPPs' offices across the province, over 70 MPPs in the fall alone. We continue to have meetings. Because of the new government, now we have to re-educate the new people in government because they all act as if they never heard of compensation before. None of the governments ever talk about workers' comp. They sometimes talk about labour issues but workers' comp seems to be a non-issue for them. We made the NDP see that it is an issue worthy of being brought up in the House of Commons.

We also work to make the general public aware of what is happening to the compensation system. It is a system you may never have to use and hopefully never have to use, but when you do have to access it, it is not going to be there so that you receive the benefits you need. We are making the general public aware that the

compensation system has to be there for you in your time of need.

(Photos: WF, ONIWG)



The Fight for Airport Workers' Health and Safety

Working Conditions at Toronto's Pearson Airport Must Improve!



Toronto Airport Workers Council is joined in its May Day rally, May 1, 2019 by delegations of airport workers from around the world.

Airport workers and their organizations from Britain, Canada, Indonesia, south Korea, Thailand and the USA recently gathered in Toronto to discuss problems facing airport workers around the world. They met during the week in conjunction with the annual Day of Mourning on April 28, for workers killed, injured and sickened from conditions at their workplace, and May Day, the International Day of Unity and Struggle of Workers to Uphold Their Rights and Dignity. Airport workers at Toronto's Pearson airport have established a tradition to mark both important days with actions with analysis.

The International Transport Federation organized the gathering of airport workers during the week. The Federation connects transport workers' unions from 147 countries. One of the biggest concerns discussed was airport workers' health and safety.



May 1, 2019 final session of airport workers organizing event before May Day rally.

The Toronto Airport Workers' Council, which represents workers from six unions as well as non-union workers at Pearson Airport, took part in the meetings. The participants shared their experiences with all in attendance and expressed the urgent need to improve working conditions at Pearson Airport.[1]

"We were able to find out through some of the workshops that we participated in that the three top issues are outsourcing, including contract flipping, wages, with low wages a problem at all of their airports, and health and safety," said Dan Janssen, co-leader of the Toronto Airport Workers' Council and Vice-President of IAMAW Local 2323, speaking to *Workers' Forum*. [2]

"Health and safety of airport workers is a big issue around the world, especially since such a race to the bottom is taking place," he added. "When you outsource a labour force, what ends up happening is that wages are often lowered and working conditions also end up going down. We thought it was important to bring everybody together in one space to talk about how we can tackle these common issues. A start is by bringing awareness of them. So we are planning an action September 1 at Toronto Pearson International Airport to bring attention to these issues, and we are asking workers at other airports around the world to hold an action on the same day, which is the Sunday before Labour Day. It is important that we show that we are all in this together, all airport workers, that it is a global movement for better working conditions."



Group photo, April 30, 2019 of airport workers attending airport workers' organizing event.

Increase of Lost-Time Injuries at Pearson Airport

The Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) 2018 Annual Report indicates a 7.8 per cent yearly increase in lost-time injuries at Pearson Airport over 2017.

Dan Janssen spoke to *Workers' Forum* regarding this situation:

"This is a 7.8 per cent increase. It is considerable and it has affected over 180 workers. What we have been doing at the Toronto Airport Workers' Council in order to tackle with the issues is to think outside the box. For a number of years now we have been asking the Toronto Airport to meet with airport workers and health and safety reps together in the same room so that we can have conversations and talk about safety culture.



"The Airport Authority finally agreed in the fall of last year and we had our first Toronto Pearson Workers' Safety Forum in January. At that meeting, there were 12 union reps, two from each of the unions that are represented on the Toronto Airport Workers' Council, as well as various managers from the airport authority, all dealing with airport safety.

"We pointed out what is happening in the workplace that has an impact on workers' safety: an increased pressure to perform, the amount of hours that workers are working, the multiple jobs that they are working. We also identified air quality as an issue in our airports. Ramp workers in particular are exposed to some pretty bad air, the air created by jet fuel, for example, or from the ground support equipment that we are using. So far, we have only had two Toronto Pearson Workers' Health and Safety Forums and it feels that we are heading in the right direction."

The Toronto Airport Workers' Council at Pearson Airport is waging a campaign to defend and improve the health and safety of airport workers by changing the working conditions for the better.

Janssen said, "When workers are treated well at the work place, when they are paid well, when they do not need to work multiple jobs, and have conditions that support a healthy work environment, you are going to have a safe environment as well.

"When you are a contract worker, especially for those where it is a three year tender, and you are coming up to your third year, your stress increases because you are worrying about what is going to happen to your wages and your benefits when the next contract is re-tendered. Are you going to end

up with a brand new employer, brand new uniform, doing exactly the same job for lower wages? We need protection in the *Canada Labour Code* for workers when a contract is retendered. That protection needs to be in place for wages, benefits, pensions, so that workers do not have that stress hanging over their heads. Otherwise priority cannot be on the safety of the aircraft, the passengers, and the workers. We have all these conditions of contract work at Pearson Airport. Working conditions at Pearson Airport have to improve!"



Korean airport workers speak at organizing event in Toronto, April 29, 2019. One of the major issues they are organizing against is contracting out of jobs.

Notes

1. The six unions that are represented on the Toronto Airport Workers' Council are Unifor, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), Teamsters Local Union 419, Public Service Alliance of Canada-Customs and Immigration Union (PSAC-CIU), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and Services Employees International Union (SEIU).

2. Contract flipping is a regressive practice of employers to award contracts to a new service provider every few years. Workers lose their jobs and must then re-apply, almost always losing any wage increases, seniority and benefits earned with their previous employer.

(Photos: WF, TAWC)



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