

Postal Workers Vote on Tentative Agreements with Canada Post

**Defending the Dignity of Labour and
a Modern Postal Service**

**– Interview, Learie Charles, President, Scarborough Local,
Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) –**



Scarborough CUPW local picket, October 4, 2025

Postal workers are voting between April 20 and May 30 on tentative agreements reached between the union's bargaining committee and Canada Post, one for urban workers and one for Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers (RSMCs). They are also voting on whether there should be a strike if a tentative agreement is rejected. TML spoke to Learie Charles, President of the Scarborough Local of CUPW, about the tentative agreements, the current conditions at the post office and the union's fight to strengthen and expand the Post Office as a vital public service.

TML: Postal workers are voting on whether to accept or reject the tentative agreements for urban workers and the RSMCs. This vote is taking place after 30 months of workers' defence of their rights and repeated egregious attacks on postal workers by Canada Post, the federal government and the media. Can you explain the situation?

Learie Charles: For both contracts the National Executive Board (NEB) of the union has recommended that workers vote in favour of the tentative agreement and in favour of a strike if the tentative agreement is rejected. The logic is that if there is a strike vote, no strike could take place until the completion of voting on the tentative agreements. There is general agreement that the RSMC (rural agreement) is an improvement and should be accepted, but not so on the Urban agreement.



I represent workers covered by the Urban and Rural agreements. My view and that of many local leaders across the country is that Urban workers should vote NO, reject the tentative agreement for the Urban workers, and that they should vote NO to the strike. This sends a clear message that the contract is unacceptable to the workers and that what must be done next is for management and the union to go back to the bargaining table because what Canada Post proposed to the workers has been rejected. A vote against a strike would make it clear that while the bargaining committees go back to negotiate a collective agreement, the workers can accept that the Post Office will be kept in operation.

CUPW has always been tactical in proposing and carrying out strike actions, only doing so when it assists in advancing the struggle of the workers. During this round of bargaining we have used different tactics, from rotating one day strikes, to not delivering flyers, to full out strike. Now the situation has become one in which, in my opinion, the tactics should be to stay on the job while the negotiations continue.

TML: Can you explain the reasoning behind the call for a NO vote on the Urban contract?

LC: The contract negotiations are incomplete in the sense that most of the proposals that were put forward in the first strike vote, and had the support of around 93 per cent of the workers who participated, have not been achieved. There are some things in the current collective agreement including language on job security and how overtime is assigned that we proposed be kept as is. However, Canada Post has proposed and the tentative agreement contains unacceptable changes that take away rights we have won in the past. For instance, currently if overtime is required for a letter carrier to complete their route, the letter carrier does that overtime and is paid the overtime rate for anything over eight hours in a day. The corporation has come back precisely at those things that have been the bedrock of the collective agreement and want to change every one of them, roll back everything, with major changes in the tentative agreement.





October 1, 2025 mass picket in Ottawa (top) and Toronto rally backing postal workers demands during nationwide strike September 25 to October 10, after which workers moved to rotating strike actions

On overtime the tentative agreement says that overtime will be given to part-time or temporary workers. Currently, if a worker is away, their assignment is offered as overtime within the stations. Now they have changed that and the first call on that will be going to temporary workers and others that are called in to do that work, or they're bringing in more part-time workers as a whole to give them that work on a daily basis. The work goes first of all to part-timers to bring them up to eight hours. The post office has a long tradition of having a large percentage of full-time workers. Now, if the new collective agreement is passed you can have up to 15 per cent of the workforce being part-time, a significant downgrading of an issue on which we have held firm, that you must have full-time work in the post office in order to give workers a decent life. Those are some of the things that have been changed.



There are other fairly drastic things. For parcel distribution, Canada Post is trying to create a whole set of part-timers and temporary-term employees to come in and perform the duties on the weekend or during the work week, claiming that it is too expensive to assign that work to current full-time workers. There is no reason that this work could not remain full-time. The union made the proposal to Canada Post that schedules be changed to the same type of schedules that workers in the postal plants have, or that workers in other seven-day-a-week sectors like hospitals have. There's no mystery about it. People are scheduled in the plants on the basis of working Tuesday to Saturday and some are scheduled from Sunday to Thursday and some are scheduled Monday to Friday, so three different schedules and it covers the whole thing. We made this proposal for the stations for the letter carriers and it was rejected because Canada Post has a different agenda which is to smash the whole system. In fact, in the Scarborough local there were letter carriers working Saturday and Sunday, year in year out, right up until June 16 last year.

TML: You've said that Canada Post is actually implementing some of the measures that are in the tentative agreement but not in the current collective agreement. Can you elaborate?

LC: Canada Post claims that it can do this because of its "managerial rights," even though the particular article that deals with management rights says that management has the right to manage only within the confines of the collective agreement. Canada Post is saying that there is a bigger legal right which they have, that once you are a business you are allowed to do things which are in the interest of the business. For instance, letter carriers, if their work takes longer than eight hours on a given day, work the necessary overtime. Now they are told that overtime has to be authorized even though if you don't complete your duties you can get a five-day suspension for delay of mail. At this time, if you do the overtime without asking for authorization, Canada Post will attempt to confiscate your overtime by charging you with disobedience or simply fining you by way of penalty. In either case, the overtime which you worked is effectively lost. If I work three hours of overtime to complete my route, I get time and a half for two and a half of those hours. Then, for the final half hour, I get double time but then I'm given a five day suspension for having done that. I just lost over a thousand dollars in wages for some overtime which may have provided me \$150. The important fact that I completed the delivery of the public's mail Canada Post does not care about. The issue of overtime is quite serious because over the years it is regular overtime work that has permitted full-time workers to make liveable income. The tentative agreement eliminates most of the overtime which made that so.



In terms of parcel delivery, there is a massive increase in the volume of parcels being delivered in Canada. In 2020 when COVID arrived, the Post Office said they were predicting that the kind of volume they were experiencing would not arrive until 2025, so they got a surprise. At the time Canada Post led in parcel delivery but then Amazon and other monopolies stepped in to get a piece of the action and Canada Post let it go. It is to get some of that business back that they want to restructure the Post Office to have far more part-time and temporary workers.

It used to be a source of pride to be a full-time postal worker but they are turning work for the Post Office from a source of stability and dignity to a hustler economy, a gig economy with no security or stability. Canada Post is focused on cutting back on what they pay the workers in wages and finding ways to do that as much as possible by only using new part-timers who start at the bottom of the wage scale and never get overtime. We hear many things about the conditions of those who do comparable work. For instance, it is common to hear about Amazon workers who sometimes have problems even being paid or have to wait a long time to be paid. The Post Office will presently not allow that to happen to that extent because individual workers are not private contractors, but at the same time it's pretty serious that by going part-time the part-timers face the disregard of the rights which full-timers have. Part-timers were promised that they would get equal benefits in terms of pensions and everything else but it becomes problematic when you're not making as much money because of the hours that you are working at the Post Office.

TML: Canada Post claims that it is modernizing the postal service and that all the cuts to service should be accepted. What do postal workers propose in terms of modernizing Canada Post?

LC: Postal banking is one important innovation because it is proven and can be extremely lucrative. There is already a network of retail outlets of Canada Post in every little spot in this country and as such postal banking can work well. Say I'm a letter carrier in a remote part of Canada. You are at home and need banking services and the banks have all pulled out of these areas. I come to deliver a letter and you tell me you need to do some banking. I can simply log you in on the terminal that I walk around with. I can use that same instrument and log you in to the Canada Post bank. The bank

will then take over dealing with you as the customer and do your transactions, all for a small fee. In other countries where they have postal banking there has been a massive increase in revenue for the post office. Those kind of things are fairly well worked out. They can be very effective in terms of making the Post Office bank a viable bank to provide services to people who need them that banks are no longer providing.



St. John's, Newfoundland, May 31, 2025

There is also a role for postal workers to partner in communities to do wellness checks, connecting with municipal services and first responders. When we go every day to someone's home, we can provide that service. People can register for a small fee – "I have an elderly parent that needs to be checked on" – and what the letter carrier would do anyway becomes a formal service which means more money is coming into Canada Post than for just bringing mail to that person. We are already delivering medicine to people in the countryside on a daily basis, to people in their homes. If a patient needs a prescription we could pick it up at the drugstore and deliver it as part of the regular mail.

Of course, Canada Post says no to postal banking. Why they're not touching it is because the banks want to keep it exclusively theirs and don't want Canada Post to touch banking services. Besides postal banking and wellness checks, there are other services. The old traditional post office bank can have a new lease on life because it is mainly in those areas where banks have literally abandoned the people. In rural areas where there is no longer even a bus service, the post office remains a community hub. Canada Post could install charging stations (for electric or hybrid cars) around the post offices themselves so that in the countryside you can go park your car and charge your car for a fee. There are ways in which the post office cannot only be kept alive but expand services to people in areas where the banks have closed and buses no longer run between communities – services beyond just delivering mail.

In terms of the need to modernize the whole transportation industry in Canada, going hybrid and all these things, the Post Office is the ideal place; it has the biggest fleet of vehicles in the entire country and in terms of modernizing and meeting environmental standards it can make a big contribution. But nothing is being done in terms of that. Proposals are many but Canada Post has rejected every plan that's been put forward by the union along those lines.

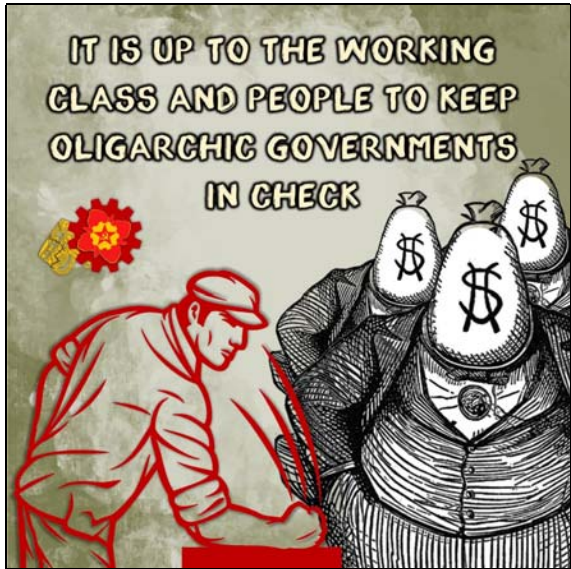
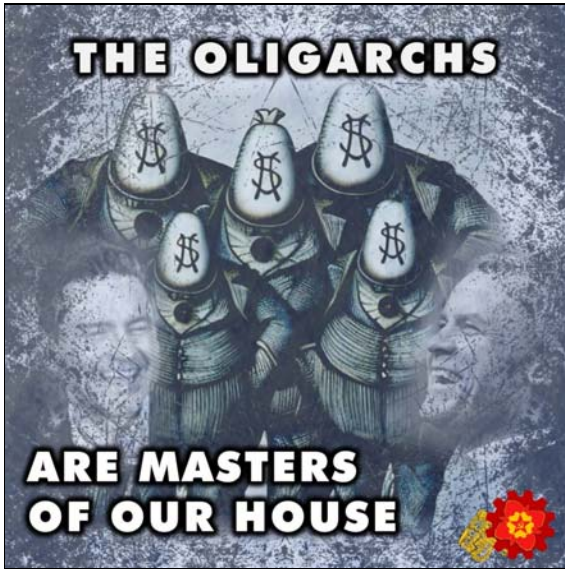


Brampton rally, May 31, 2025

TML: What is the situation in the workplace now as the voting is taking place?

LC: For the last two years of the negotiations, Canada Post has been implementing changes that are not in the existing collective agreement but in the tentative agreement that we are voting on. The supervisory staff have been directed to implement those changes even though they are not officially in place. So, for overtime, for instance, they have been imposing what Canada Post wants and is in the tentative agreement and penalizing workers when they do not comply, and firing them. After you fail to comply three or four times by doing overtime without authorization and get suspended, then the fifth time you get fired. The level of disciplinary action is quite high. The level of supervision is increased. They have actually hired quite a few additional supervisors to come out on the streets to see whether workers are doing the work as it should be done. In the plants, they are doing the same thing. Recently they have been trying to push out injured workers, or older workers and workers who have self-accommodated by working in positions that are less demanding. With injured workers the main way is to say they cannot accommodate them in the way that they have in the past. They are disposed of. All kinds of ways are being found to push workers into early retirement. Recently workers are just being bluntly told, "we have no work for you. Go home," something we have never seen before. This happened to a worker who has a permanent disability but was working productively in a position she was able to do. She was called into the supervisor's office during her shift and told she was no longer needed and should go home.

I believe that with the tentative agreement, the changes that Canada Post has announced, and the escalating attacks on postal workers at the workplace, what they are trying to do is kill the post office as it stands right now and turn it into a countryside service where they cannot get rid of it. Meanwhile, in all the big cities, Canada Post is handing over the work to the conglomerates, most from the U.S. and one or two from Canada. Their line is to do everything to cut costs, that the post office is bankrupt, get rid of it, that work is already being done by others in the industry which we should not compete with. You can see the level of arrogance in what the Industrial Inquiry Commissioner (Canada Post), William Kaplan, said – that the Post Office does not exist to provide jobs for CUPW members. But it was never the position of the union that Canada Post exists to provide jobs for CUPW members. The Post Office exists to serve Canadians and we think it should be strengthened and expanded to provide services that people need. We do not agree that its role is to serve big business by getting their products delivered in as cheap a manner as possible, at the lowest cost, at the expense of the postal workers.



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