



INFORMATION UPDATE

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Confronting Conservatives on Bill C-4

UCCO-SACC-CSN representatives Jason Layman (local shop steward, Sask Pen) and Second National Vice-President Jason Godin made the union's case against the draconian anti-union provisions of Bill C-4 to key Conservative MPs when they attended Parliamentary finance committee hearings November 26 in Ottawa.

Since the government did not invite the union to testify on this important bill that could drastically affect our members for years to come, Layman and Godin seized an opportunity to speak to MPs during a break and at the end of the committee hearing. Here is a brief summary of those discussions.

With Prince Albert MP Randy Hoback, whose riding includes Saskatchewan Penitentiary, concerns were raised around the Canada Labour Code changes and the serious impacts it will have on correctional officer safety. Mr. Hoback stated he would be willing to talk with us about our concerns at a meeting in the future.

Mr. Hoback went on to say that he often found committee hearings to be plagued with misinformation on both sides and that he wanted to hear our concerns directly.



Prince Albert MP Randy Hoback

We pointed out that we were not invited to testify but suggested that it is important to hear our concerns given that many correctional officers live and work in his riding.

At the end of the hearing, Edmonton-Leduc MP James Rajotte, who chairs the finance committee, asked the witnesses testifying (including some of our union colleagues) about concerns with the public servants who are already over 80% designated being

forced to negotiate by arbitration in the interests of public safety and security.

Because UCCO-SACC-CSN had not been invited to testify, we approached Mr. Rajotte at the end of the hearing to explain that correctional officers are 100% designated and that the union has never contested designation during any of our negotiations.

We further explained that, during the past two negotiations, the union has participated in the existing conciliation processes in a good-faith effort to resolve impasses at the bargaining table. Why, we asked Mr. Rajotte, would the government now force us to binding

arbitration when the conciliation process has proven effective?

Mr. Rajotte responded by handing us his coordinates and asked for us to prepare a written presentation for the committee. We noted that this government's habit of presenting massive omnibus bills that are then rapidly pushed through Parliament with minimal debate leaves little opportunity to consult with the people most affected, in this case our members. This, we emphasized, is a dangerous way to operate.

With an eye to negotiations to come in 2014, we

pointed out that the government's attempt to compare our compensation and benefits to those of provincial correctional officers is unacceptable for us given the apples-and-oranges differences to the jobs. Our job, we added, is getting increasingly difficult and dangerous with the government's steady flow of crime legislation.

We stressed to Mr. Rajotte that this comparison is in no way acceptable to UCCO-SACC-CSN as a basis for bargaining. He agreed and said he understood our objection.



Edmonton-Leduc MP James Rajotte, chair of the House of Commons finance committee

We also raised our deep concern over Bill C-4's changes to the Canada Labour Code, which will severely limit the union's ability to address threats to the health and safety of our members. We provided statistics that demonstrate the rising dangers in our profession before asking why his government would want to limit our ability to resolve safety issues, and why these kinds of changes would be hidden in an omnibus budget bill.

Lastly, we suggested that it would be far more useful for government ministers to sit down and dialogue with UCCO-SACC-CSN instead of repeatedly insulting our elected representatives as "big union bosses." Mr. Rajotte insisted he would never use that term.

We also spoke briefly with NDP MP Guy Caron about our concerns. Mr. Caron assured us that the NDP would offer us any assistance we needed to this undemocratic omnibus legislation.