

August 23, 2024.

The Honourable Steven McKinnon
Minister of Labour and Seniors
Steven.MacKinnon@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister,

We write to you with growing concern for a second time regarding a critical issue in labor relations, specifically the looming possibility of a strike among the pilots of Air Canada.

The members of Ciffa represent a workforce of tens of thousands of highly skilled professionals across various sectors, including freight forwarding, drayage, warehousing, freight brokerage, and customs brokerage. These professionals are essential to managing approximately 80% of Canada's import and export freight traffic, playing a vital role in the nation's freight supply chain.

Air Canada's cargo network is unparalleled in providing direct access between Canada and international markets. A strike would effectively ground Air Canada's air cargo operations, leaving businesses with minimal, if any, viable alternatives due to the limited capacity of other air cargo operators.

As you are likely aware, air freight is a particularly critical mode of transport, especially for time-sensitive products. These include medical equipment, vaccines, isotopes, and other healthcare products that require specific handling and have extremely short shelf lives. Furthermore, many agricultural products—such as salmon, lobster, cherries, and beef—rely on air transport to remain competitive in international markets. Many regional communities are heavily dependent on these exports, which would come to a standstill in the event of a work stoppage at Air Canada.

The cargo business demands extensive planning and precise logistical coordination, making it highly vulnerable to last-minute changes or uncertainty. The potential for a strike, and the uncertainty it brings, could pose significant challenges for businesses across Canada.

The loss of air freight capacity within Canada's logistics sector, particularly on the heels of recent railway disruptions, would deal a severe blow to our country's reputation and economy. We view this as a serious threat to our members, their clients, and the broader Canadian economy.

Although CIFFA does not take a position on the specifics of the negotiations between Air Canada and its pilots, and while we encourage the parties to reach a mutually agreed-upon settlement, we firmly believe that the government also has a public responsibility to prevent any disruption that could have far-reaching consequences. The airline industry is still in recovery from the significant setbacks experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, including shutdowns, furloughs and route rationalizations.

In light of this, we urge you to convey to both parties that Canada cannot afford a labour disruption in this crucial sector. We strongly encourage you to use all available resources within your department to facilitate an early resolution and, if necessary, to intervene to avert a strike.

Sincerely,



Bruce Rodgers

Executive Director, CIFFA



Julia Kuzeljevich

Director, Policy and Regulatory Affairs, CIFFA

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