
Unifor to start strike vote at CN, pushes company to follow collective bargaining process

Unifor President Jerry Dias announced today that after five months of futile negotiations with CN Rail, the union will be commencing strike votes at CN as of early next week.

He made the announcement at a press conference following a more than 100 person leadership meeting of union workplace representatives at CN and CP. The group was brought together to review the contents of the CP package. It was unanimously approved and will now be voted on by the 1,800 members working at CP over the next two weeks. Members of the Unifor-CN bargaining committees also provided an update at the meeting.

Dias said the union will be setting a strike deadline close to end of March to allow CN customers to make alternative arrangements. On February 14, Unifor was able to reach an agreement with CP Rail which made a number of improvements including, rail safety and working conditions.

“CN is trying to get a discounted settlement, by counting on the government to cut off collective bargaining with back to work legislation,” said Dias.

“CN is highly profitable, even more so than CP Rail, yet somehow it is claiming it cannot meet the pattern agreement that we established at CP.”

Dias said the union and its members are not pleased to be forced into this position. “Companies like CN should not be leaning on government to interfere in collective bargaining.”

The strike vote process will take up to three weeks, along with the ratification process where members at CP will vote on their new contract.

Unifor Local 101R represents 1,800 members at CP Rail in 18 different locations. Unifor members conduct safety inspections on all rail cars and locomotives, as well as maintenance and repairs.

Unifor has six collective agreements with CN Rail, which cover mechanics, clerical workers, excavator operators, locomotive engineers (Savage Rail) and truck drivers. Unifor Local 100 represents skilled trades in mechanical shops and Unifor Council 4000 represents intermodal, clerical, mechanics and owner operators. Unifor is the largest union at CN with more than 4,800 members. The current collective agreement expired on December 31, 2014 and negotiations had been taking place since September.

Unifor represents 9,000 railway workers and 305,000 members across the country in every sector of the economy.

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