



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF BOILERMAKERS

Joseph Maloney, M.S.C., International Vice-President

boilermaker.ca

May 4, 2017

The Hon. Thomas Mulcair, Leader
New Democratic Party of Canada
MP, Outremont
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Mulcair,

I write in reference to the upcoming China-Canada talks in pursuit of a possible free trade agreement. I wish to draw your attention to a detail, present in both the failed Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations and in the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) that has escaped much comment. Nevertheless, this proposal, which has been made by the Chinese negotiators, could result in the loss of thousands of vital skilled-trades jobs in the construction industry.

The proposal I refer to would allow Chinese companies to import entire workforces for large-scale industrial projects their companies may be hired to construct. British Columbia's government has already made arrangements to allow this practice to occur when liquefied natural gas (LNG) refineries and terminals are built there. And CETA, while not making this practice explicit, allows it under sections dealing with movement of licensed trades, mutual recognition of skills and favoured treatment of European companies.

Under this provision, foreign workforces could be imported wholesale to build some of Canada's most important and strategic industrial facilities, including nuclear plants, refineries, chemical plants, oil-sands facilities, shipyards and pipelines. Not only do these projects employ hundreds of thousands of Canadians, they are also very much tied in with our national security.

Let me make it clear that my union and our members are not afraid of foreign competition. Canadian Boilermakers undergo the world's toughest apprenticeship program and most stringent testing before we can work on the large-scale industrial projects for which our skills are needed.

But it is entirely reasonable that if we are to compete, we insist on a level playing field. In this aspect of the proposed China-Canada trade agreement, the field is far from level.

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Insofar as compensation is concerned, Chinese average wages are half, or even less than half, of Canadian wages. Any government that throws competition for Canadian jobs open under such circumstances is condemning thousands of its own citizens to lower standards of living and more unemployment. In turn, this means lower tax revenues, less spending in Canadian communities and significantly higher government spending on unemployment and other social supports.

Chinese training for Boilermakers is simply not up to par with Canadian standards. Lack of training can lead to accidents, injuries and even fatalities on these highly complex projects, most of which handle large amounts of flammable, explosive or caustic substances under pressure. In turn, an accident can lead to severe health and safety consequences in nearby communities.

I fail to see the logic in penalizing Canadian workers in exchange for the unproven benefits of a China-Canada free trade agreement such as the one now being discussed. And I find the national security implications of handing the construction and/or maintenance of strategic industrial installations to foreign countries concerning.

I hope you will agree with my union in opposing the proposal to allow foreign workforces to build and maintain strategic Canadian industrial facilities. And I would request a meeting with you, Ms. Tracey Ramsey and/or other members of your shadow cabinet to further discuss how we might work together to oppose this provision of any proposed Canada-China trade agreement.

Yours sincerely,



Joseph Maloney, M.S.C.
International Vice-President for Canada
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers

cc. Tracey Ramsey

Hassan Yussuff, President
Canadian Labour Congress