



## INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF BOILERMAKERS

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

[boilermaker.ca](http://boilermaker.ca)

May 4, 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne  
Minister of International Trade  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Messrs. Trudeau and Champagne,

I write to request your help on an issue that has grave implications for Canadian workers, Canada's economy and our national security.

I refer to provisions of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union and media reports around possible trade negotiations with China that would allow companies from foreign countries to import entire workforces to build and maintain industrial projects for which they have won bids.

According to media reports, China has openly requested such access to the Canadian economy. CETA's provisions provide for treating companies based in a Party on the same basis as Canadian companies, for recognition of foreign qualifications and for allowing EU companies to bring their own workers to Canada, bypassing the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program.

Such provisions could spell disaster for many thousands of Canadians who work in our energy and construction industries, specifically those who, like the members of my own union, build and maintain these strategic facilities.

CETA's Joint Interpretive Instrument and the full text of the Agreement make provisions for maintaining each country's labour standards and contain a laudable commitment from Canada to ratify the Fundamental Conventions of the International Labour Organization. Unfortunately, these measures are of no assistance in protecting Canadian workers from the wholesale importation of foreign workforces when new developments are considered, or when existing facilities need to be shut down for regular maintenance.

However, CETA does leave the door open for both federal and provincial governments to make regulations that "regulate economic activity in the public interest."

We believe it is most definitely in the public interest to protect Canadian workers from unfair competition and ensure that strategic industrial facilities are built by Canadians. Examples of these facilities include, but are not limited to, liquefied natural gas plants, oil sands installations, nuclear power generation facilities, refineries, chemical plants and pipelines.

.../2

**Joseph Maloney**, May 4, 2017, page 2

In the interests of safety alone, experience has shown that there are potentially serious problems with using foreign workforces to build these facilities. These problems affect not only the project personnel, but also nearby communities.

Economically, these projects inject billions of dollars into the Canadian economy through the wages and salaries of hundreds of thousands of workers.

More than most, our union understands the effects that labour shortages can have on our economy. Our trade is one that cannot be replaced in the construction and maintenance of large industrial installations. If we cannot supply enough qualified Boilermakers to our contractors, projects on which our members depend for employment can be delayed.

For this reason, we have worked with our employers and with governments at the provincial and federal levels to ensure a sufficient supply of Boilermakers. We have encouraged more young people to become Boilermaker apprentices. We have worked with First Nations communities and veterans (through our Helmets to Hardhats program). And, when we can find no Canadians after an exhaustive search, we have used the federal government's TFW program to find limited numbers of qualified Boilermakers from the United States and Ireland.

The process through which we find qualified workers to supply to our contractors is much different than that of a large engineering company from Europe (or, perhaps, from China) that would import an entire project workforce from its home country. We have an obligation – one we willingly accept – to give priority to Canadians. We operate strictly within the guidelines and regulations of provincial and federal governments to ensure that any foreign workers we supply are not taking jobs that could be done by Canadians. Any foreign workers we do import are paid the same wages and benefits, and have the same workplace rights, as our Canadian members. They receive additional training and are tested to ensure their knowledge and skill level conforms to Canadian standards.

It would seem that under CETA, the establishment and enforcement of such regulations and practices are not a consideration.

What will this mean for Canadian workers? Mainly, it will mean they will face unfettered competition for work from countries where workers are paid half or less than half of Canada's average wages. European competition for Canadian jobs will not come from countries with higher wages. It will come from the many lower-wage EU countries, such as Poland and Slovenia, where the average wage is \$12,000 or less.

Ironically, these same countries have used the provisions of CETA to declare that they reserve the right to prohibit Canadian workers from employment in industries of strategic importance, such as nuclear energy and pipelines. These countries recognize that such industries should be exempt from some CETA provisions. Will Canada not do the same in the interests of our national security?

We fail to see how the Canadian economy will benefit from the wholesale importation of foreign workforces. Undoubtedly, foreign (and perhaps some Canadian) corporations will benefit from lower outlays, but at what cost? Where is the logic in the possible displacement of thousands of Canadian workers to benefit offshore interests?

.../3

**Joseph Maloney**, May 4, 2017, page 3

For this reason, we ask that your government take the initiative in protecting Canadian workers from the possible effects of the wholesale importing of foreign workforces.

Specifically, we ask:

- That the federal government reserve the right, under the provisions of CETA, to make laws and regulations that restrict the importation of foreign tradespeople to the limits set through the Temporary Foreign Workers program, including the Labour Market Impact Assessments that appear to be disallowed under CETA's ban of economic needs tests.
- That the federal government specifically reserve the right to make laws and regulations relating to the extent to which foreign companies can operate in strategic industries of importance to our national security.
- That the appropriate federal and provincial authorities review their regulations around trades qualification and testing to ensure the safety of workers on a project and of surrounding communities.
- That you arrange a meeting with ourselves, other representatives of the skilled trades and our industry to further discuss the possible ramifications of wholesale workforce importation and possible solutions to the very real problems this will cause.

We hope for your positive response and will be happy to supply any information you require.

Yours sincerely,



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

cc. Newton Jones, International President  
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers

Hassan Yussuf, President  
Canadian Labour Congress

Members of the Privy Council

Members of Parliament