



1 Rideau Street Suite 700 | Ottawa, ON | K1N 8S7
P: 613.670.5805 C: 613.601.2350

Bill C-525, Employees' Voting Rights Act

Summary

Merit Canada believes that whether for electors or workers, a secret ballot is one of the fundamental pillars of a democracy, and that it is impossible to argue otherwise. However, under current rules, a workplace can be unionized if a union provides the Labour Board with cards it claims have been signed by employees representing 50% + 1 of the target workplace. This is a system ripe for intimidation and manipulation, as has been documented in hearings before various Labour Boards across Canada.

Bill C-525 seeks to address this democratic deficit and would require union organizers to get expressions of support from 40% of workers in federally regulated sectors in order to force a vote on union certification. That vote would then be held by secret ballot. If a majority of workers who vote support joining the union, then certification proceeds.

Bill C-525 does not embark on radical new territory. It merely brings federal law in line with several provinces which employ this same system.

A Leger Marketing poll found 80% of workers support secret ballot votes on unionization.

Reality Check

To understand the flaws in the current voting system for unionization in federally regulated sectors, consider if the same process applied to our electoral system. It would mean candidates for public office simply have to drive around their district signing up voters for months on end – without any oversight from election officials – and then show up at the returning office with a bag of cast ballots representing 50% + 1 of voters and be declared the representative for that area.

No one would defend such a system in a democracy, not should anyone try to defend such a system for a deeply personal decision like voting on whether a workplace should become unionized.

Bill C-525 Status

Bill C-525 was passed by the House of Commons on April 9, 2014 and awaits debate at Second Reading in the Senate.



Recommendation

Workers should be able to cast a vote on the future of their workplace free from games and intimidation, incidents of which are well-documented under the current system. Bill C-525 would protect workers from union and management intimidation in the union certification process. Therefore, Merit Canada encourages all parties to support its passage through Parliament.

About Merit Canada

Merit Canada is the national voice of Canada's eight provincial Open Shop construction associations. Together we represent the companies and workers who build more than 70% of the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional, and Residential construction projects coast to coast. As of June 2011, the Canadian construction sector employed 1.260 million Canadians with 900,000 working in the "open shop" sector. This represents almost 8.6% of Canada's total labour force, and 33% of the goods-manufacturing sector labour force.