

May 3, 2016

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

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of the 4,500 Financial Officers in the federal public service we represent, the Association of Canadian Financial Officers is calling on you to continue to demonstrate your commitment to bargaining rights at home and abroad by ensuring Canada ratifies International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention Number 98 regarding the Right to Organise and the Right to Collective Bargaining (1949).

As Canada makes its return to full engagement on the global stage, our failure to ratify this important convention stands as a blight on our global reputation. Convention 98 is one of eight ILO fundamental conventions. It protects and promotes of fundamental labour rights, including the right of all workers to join a union of their own choosing and to bargain collectively. It has been endorsed by 164 nations including six other G-20 countries. In fact, Canada is one of only 23 nations that hasn't ratified the convention, putting us in the company of countries with poor records of justice for workers and their fundamental labour and human rights, including Afghanistan, Iran, China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

As a founding member of the ILO, Canada has long been a voice for the progressive protection of workers' rights. Indeed, it was a Liberal Canadian government that played a key role in having the ILO adopt this very convention in 1949. In 1998 Canada renewed its commitment to the ILO by helping draft the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of the ILO and by voting for its adoption. In so doing Canada promised "to respect, to promote and to realize, in good faith" the principles underlying the fundamental conventions of the ILO, including freedom of association.

Ratification of this convention would also send an important message domestically, reiterating that the government is committed to protecting workers' human and labour rights. In 2007 and again in 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that collective bargaining is a constitutional right of all Canadians protected under Section 2(d) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Instead of

these decisions spurring the Canadian government on to ratify No. 98, over the past eight years Canada has seen the passing of federal legislation designed to further erode Canadian labour rights.

It's to your credit, Mr. Prime Minister, that the past few months have seen a welcome reversal of much of this legislation. Ratifying Convention No. 98 would reflect on the global stage much of what the Canadian government is doing domestically under your leadership.

In your September 2015 letter to the public service, you emphasized that “[a] Liberal government will be committed to restoring fair and balanced labour laws that respect the integral role played by unions in our society, and their importance to middle class prosperity.” Ratifying Convention No. 98 will contribute directly to the Liberal Government’s commitment to strengthening the middle class. Both the OECD and World Bank, among others, have shown that the right to organise and bargain collectively, rights protected under Convention No. 98, strengthen the middle class by protecting and promoting positive working and living conditions.

Under the leadership of Liberal Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, the post-war Canadian government emerged as a global leader on important issues including workers’ rights. It was seen by many as a coming out party for a country that found its feet and its voice during World War II. It seems only fitting, then, that your government, which has done so much to return Canada to this position of global influence, bring the matter full circle and ratify Convention No. 98.

We look forward to working with you to help make that happen.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Chamberlain', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Chamberlain
Director of Labour Relations and General Counsel
Association of Canadian Financial Officers

cc The Honourable Scott Brison
The Honourable Maryann Mihychuk
Mr. Rodger Cuzner