

# OPEN LETTER: Negotiate with Workers, don't legislate them back to work

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**15 November 2021**

To Premier Blaine Higgs

Cc: MLAs

We, the undersigned, are writing to condemn the use of the Emergency Measures Act to criminalize the strike action of over 2,000 healthcare workers in New Brunswick.

About 22,000 front-line workers across ten different Canadian Union of Public Employees locals, representing school and college support staff, court stenographers, transportation employees, maintenance workers, corrections officers, and hospital and nursing home workers voted between 89% to 98 % to take strike actions after years without a collective agreement and no increase in real wages. Workers walked off the job starting October 29. Within a week of striking, healthcare workers were legislated back to work using the Emergency Measures Act.

These workers are the ones who provide essential public services to all citizens of our province and who have kept us safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their hard work and dedication should be recognized through fair treatment and dignified working conditions.

We believe that the present situation will not be settled by invoking the Emergency Measure Act to force workers in the healthcare sector back to work. We are also concerned about the steep fines threatened against workers and CUPE, well above those stipulated in the Mandatory Order. In 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada struck

down a similar order issued by the government of Saskatchewan and enshrined the right to strike in the Constitution, saying “The right to strike is an essential part of a meaningful collective bargaining process in our system of labour relations.

The right to strike is not merely derivative of collective bargaining, it is an indispensable component of that right.”

Premier Higgs, we urge your government to reverse this decision and instead go back to the negotiation table and bargain in good faith with the duly elected workers’ representatives.

Sincerely,

Sarah Lunney, organizer	ACORN New Brunswick
Philippe Beaulieu, President, & Camen Gibbs, General Director	Association acadienne des artistes professionnel.le.s du Nouveau-Brunswick
Rebecca MacDonald, organizer	Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network
Dr. Adrian Edgar	Clinic 554
Cecile Cassista, Executive Director	Coalition for Seniors and Nursing Home Residents' Rights
Abram Lutes, Provincial Coordinator	New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice
Caleb Thompson, Organizer	Communist Party - Fredericton Club
Lois Corbett, Executive Director	Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Garry Guild, Organizer	Council of Canadians - Fredericton Chapter
Leticia Adair, Organizer	Council of Canadians - Saint John Chapter
Debra Hopper, Chairperson	Council of Canadians - Kent County Chapter
Dan Weston, Coordinator	Fredericton Anti-Poverty Organization
Linsay Nickum, Chair	Fierté Fredericton Pride
Hafsah Mohammad, Organizer	Grassroots NB
Lucille Doiron, General Director	Imaginons la péninsule autrement
Alphonse Dionne, president	La Conférence Mère Teresa de la Société de

	Saint-Vincent de Paul
Lynaya Astephen, Organizer	Leap4wards
Suzanne Fournier, Executive Director	National Farmers Union in New Brunswick
Jael Duarte, Tenants Advocate	NB Coalition for Tenants Rights
Shelley Petit, Chair	NB Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
Sarah Kardash, Chair	NB Media Co-op
Johanne Perron, Executive Director	Pay Equity Coalition
Susan O'Donnell, Lead Researcher	RAVEN - Rural Action and Voices for the Environment
Monique Brideau, president	Regroupment Feministe du N-B
Chris Larsson, organizer	Reproductive Justice NB
Alexandre Cédric Doucet, President	Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick
Tracy Glynn, organizer	Solidarité Fredericton Solidarity
Marilyn Lerch, organizer	Tantramar Alliance Against Fracking
Wolastoqewi Kci-Sakom spasaqsit possesom - Ron Tremblay (Wolastoq Grand Chief morningstar burning)	Wolastoq Grand Council
Caleb Thompson, Organizer	Young Communist League - Fredericton