

Ottawa, June 8, 2007

The Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, P.C., M.P.
485 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Re. Actions of CP Rail Police Force during a labour dispute in Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Minister,

I would like to call your attention to the recent labour dispute in Vancouver, involving Canadian Pacific rail maintenance workers and the company's police officers. The maintenance workers, now back on the job, were picketing in a legal area, but video footage has revealed that the CPR police came in force and told them to move along or they would arrest them. Then they almost immediately began dragging them off the picket line and handcuffing them. While they were being "searched," workers were stripped of their turbans and kirpans.

As a result of this, as you are probably aware, BC Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair is calling for a public inquiry into the special powers granted to private police forces that are being used by an increasing number of companies across the country. The Teamsters Union is filing a civil lawsuit against CPR on behalf of its members for false arrest, false imprisonment, assault and battery and unlawful interference with charter rights. The union was also in BC Supreme Court last week for an injunction application against CP Rail and CP Police, and in front of the Canada Labour Relations Board to make an unfair labour practices complaint.

Given the nature of the charges and the request for a public inquiry, many of my constituents are concerned and puzzled by the Government of Canada's silence on this issue. One look at the clip of the video on the Teamsters' website (http://www.tcrmwed.ca/ENG/NEWS/shocking_video.htm) will, I am sure, convince you of the seriousness of these charges and the need for a federal voice of support for a public inquiry.

I would appreciate hearing from you, as soon as possible, about what steps the federal government plans to take on this issue. Thank you for your consideration with this matter.

Sincerely,

Sukh Dhaliwal, MP
Newton—North Delta