

“People can’t finish the routes and they’re getting bullied”: Canada Post worker describes miserable working conditions

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The following comments from a long-time postal worker in Alberta emerged from a recent discussion with the World Socialist Web Site. We encourage all Canada Post workers who want to speak out against management harassment and the complicity of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers in enforcing concessions to contact us by filling out the form at the end of this article.

Around 50,000 postal workers are currently working under contracts that expired more than three months ago. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) is dragging out talks with management while refusing to call a strike vote, making clear that their goal is to impose another round in a long series of concession-filled contracts. A group of postal workers has declared their support to form a rank-and-file committee. A meeting will be held on June 16 at 1 p.m. Eastern to discuss a founding statement. Fill out the form at the end of this article to participate.

Basically, modern Canada Post has been a nightmare, to say the least. I have worked for this company for 17 years. After 2011’s contract, which myself and a very small minority voted against, it was almost like management doubled in size. And they were there to bully. It was unbelievable.

And at the time we got robocalled by the union president, Danny Lamont, to vote yes for this [Conservative Prime Minister Stephen] Harper contract. He said this is the best we’re going to get, and we’ve been in modern post hell ever since.

When I first started at this depot, it had 128 routes, three supervisors and one superintendent. Now, today, that same depot has 45 routes, 5 supervisors, one superintendent and one manager. You get my drift? We have been slashed and reduced by at least two-thirds of our workforce. And the workloads are incredible.

People cannot finish the routes and they are getting bullied. I just witnessed this last week on Tuesday, a temp

got pulled off the floor. I used to be a shop steward, but that’s a target on your back now. So I stopped being a shop steward about three years ago. But I said, this guy’s allowed representation. He was taken in, and another supervisor came over to me and said, “We’re allowed to have a conversation.” And I said, “Yeah, but he’s allowed representation in that conversation.” Another supervisor from another area followed the temporary employee, and he was scolded and they closed the door. And he was told not to bring back mail anymore and that he had to speed up and do it within 8 hours. No more overtime.

The volumes are unbelievable and we keep having restructures. The depot I work at now had a restructure and we lost two routes and gained a supervisor. How does that happen?

I am very vocal and I talk a lot and I have been financially bullied by this corporation to the point where I do not trust any supervisor, any superintendent, any manager. I have called out and emailed over the last three years Doug Ettinger [Canada Post President & CEO] and got his mouthpiece Susan Thomas emailing me back. I have been called a whistleblower.

Stuff has just gone crazy, so I am calling out these people because I want it to escalate to something. I think we have a lawsuit, but I have already said too much on that front. You speak out and you get suspended.

One day in 2019, I was talking to the supervisor on the floor in front of my work area. I got in there at about noon. He did a “reach around” with his hand exposed to a female carrier that he was always flirting with when she was passing by him on his backside. I said, “What was that?” And he asked me if I knew what a “box grab” was. So I filed paperwork that we had a conversation that I thought was inappropriate for a supervisor on the floor to be having with me.

I went to the female letter carrier and I told her what had happened. She said she had not noticed, and did not want

anything to do with it. So I said I felt uncomfortable, and that I was going to write up a statement and keep her name out of it. My statement clearly identifies her anonymously as “female letter carrier.” I put the statement in and I go on holidays. Three days into my holidays, I get a call from a shop steward saying, “[Letter carrier’s name]’s got a 2-4, about this claim of yours.” But first of all, how did he know it was her?

I get back to work and confront the superintendent on this. He says, well, clearly your statement says her name. I said, “Did you read it? Because it clearly doesn’t” and put the letter down in front of him. And he doesn’t have anything to say. He just says, “We determined there was nothing there and that’s that.”

The pandemic was a joke, too, because our business exploded. We had to follow rules and the management side got to make up the rules. And the rules were while we are at desks we do not have to wear masks, but when you are at cubicles you better wear those masks. I have pictures of managers not wearing their masks, and these are the people who have been promoted up the ranks.

Then I developed shingles, coincidentally, a month after I reported this guy for doing the “box grab” in front of me. So I’m off for probably a good seven months at the start of the pandemic. I go back in September and we were super busy. Like, I have never seen it that busy. Every day there were five tons of parcels. Everything was shut down, but the postal service was making tons of money.

We have 23 vice presidents apparently. They are called chief of people’s safety officers, just made up titles. All these guys have alliances.

We are only supporting our management that gets things done. There are a lot of good people that work on both sides that actually get stuff done. But I talked to one regularly at my new depot and he says, “We feel the same. We are fed up. We are the ones that are burned out because we get everybody coming to us.”

And if you do not comply, then you get suspensions without pay. Because I have graduated [due to having so many suspensions], I do not get one-day or three-day suspensions anymore. I get five automatically.

I just had 2-4s served to me the other day from the superintendent at the depot I work at. I have heard lots about her, she punishes people daily. She is the worst in suspensions ever. I know her history just from people coming in there and telling me.

A lot of the time they will talk to you like you are a child and demean you on the work floor in front of others to see how you react. And as soon as you overreact to that, it’s a suspension without pay, they can emergency suspend you.

We have a grievance system that is so bizarre and the

management takes advantage of it and stockpiles grievances. Now we are at a 3 to 5 year wait before your grievance is heard. Even if you win your grievance, you are financially dependent on those suspensions coming five years down the road.

We are getting bigger yet Post is shrinking its service. But Canada Post will suspend you in a heartbeat and then they have to replace you with two, maybe three temps. And that’s how temps get paid nothing. I am paid \$30 an hour, but a temp is paid \$19 an hour. When you do the math, they have to hire 2 to 3 temps to cover an experienced person and Canada Post is losing money.

If you are a temp, you work for two-and-a-half years before you are permanent, if you last that long. Because right out of school you are not called. So depending on when you are released out of school, you get no training until you are thrown on the job maybe three or four months later, and you forget everything you learned in training, right? So now you are in an impossible situation, unless you ask for help and say, “I’m the new guy and there’s no way I’m able to do a whole route.” But a lot of them do not vocalise that. So now they are stuck and they do not know what to do.

The new supervisors are restructuring the depots. If a supervisor manages to figure out how to manipulate the computer using outdated information from three or ten years ago, if he goes back far enough he can find reduced numbers that can allow him to readjust and rebuild the route. So here, we lost two routes. We went from 1,100 points of call to 1,400 points of call now. So again, everything’s down to the minute at Canada Post.

Granted not everybody uses our service nowadays, most of our mail is ad mail, a huge dependency of Canada Post which has screwed the newspaper business. Canada Post has attacked these other industries and has gotten away with it.

On the other hand, if what we were supposed to be doing is servicing the customer, then the number of routes should be growing because Canada is growing. So why aren’t Albertans getting the service they deserve? Why are we still allowing this management to walk all over us and change up the future of Canada Post?



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