



February 23, 2021

The Honourable Filomena Tassi, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Labour
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario

Via e-mail to: Filomena.Tassi@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Tassi:

I am communicating to express the concerns of the Canadian soybean sector pertaining to the threatened resumption of the injurious August, 2020 labour dispute at the Port of Montreal.

Soy Canada is the national value chain organization that represents soybean seed developers, farmers, processors, exporters and affiliated organizations. Produced from Nova Scotia to Alberta, and providing farm cash receipts of \$2.5 - \$3.0 billion annually, soybeans are Canada's third most valuable field crop. Soybeans are particularly significant to farm incomes in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.

Two-thirds of Canada's soybean production must be exported. Internationally competitive and dependable transportation to foreign markets is indispensable. During 2020, soybeans accounted for 53%, by volume, and 66%, by value, of containerized grain exports through the Port of Montreal.

Canada's performance as a trustworthy supplier was materially impaired by the labour strife that occurred at the Port only six months ago. At that time, the diversion of rail shipments and vessels resulted in: breaches of contract obligations with international clients; increased costs for both overland and ocean vessel shipping; reduction or elimination of narrow profit margins for producers and exporters; and, to the benefit of our competitors, further deterioration of this country's fragile reputation for reliable transportation.

The current threat is even more grave in the context of, first, the brief period since the August labour disruption at the Port and, second, the current global shortage of containers. Container owners and shippers will hesitate to allocate containers to exporters intending to ship through a strike-prone port.

The seven-month truce that occurred in August, 2020 was preceded by nineteen months of unsuccessful negotiations. The period of failed negotiations has now reached twenty-five months. Given the ongoing and prolonged inability of the parties to negotiate a settlement, we encourage the Government of Canada to employ every available mechanism to ensure the continuation of vital value-added container trade through the Port of Montreal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ernie Sirski", is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Ernie Sirski
Chair, Board of Directors

C.c.: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister

The Honourable Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Small Business and Export Promotion

Members, House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Members, House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food