Around the Coffee Table with Dale Jodoin

When the Right to Strike Is on the Table

By Dale Jodoin
Columnist

Oshawa is a union town. We know what a picket line looks like.
For generations, families here have lived through strikes, layoffs and long talks between workers and companies. Sometimes people supported the union. Sometimes they blamed the union. Sometimes they blamed the company.
But people talked about it.
Now there is another labour issue Canadians should be talking about.
The federal government is preparing changes to Canada's labour laws. Those changes could affect what happens when workers in federally regulated workplaces go on strike or employers lock them out.
Unions are worried.
The Canadian Labour Congress has warned Ottawa not to weaken the right to strike. It is especially concerned about Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code.
That section gives the federal labour minister broad powers during a labour dispute. Ottawa has used it during several major disputes in recent years. The Canadian Labour Congress says Section 107 has been used eight times since 2024 in ways that ended strikes or lockouts and sent disputes toward binding arbitration.
Think about what that could mean at the bargaining table.
Workers go on strike because they want pressure put on the employer. They stop getting their regular pay. The company may lose money. Nobody really wins during a long strike. That pressure is part of bargaining.
But what happens if workers believe Ottawa will eventually order them back?
Then turn the question around.
What happens if a company believes the government will eventually step in and end the strike?
Would that company feel the same pressure to settle?
Those are fair questions.
We saw how serious that got in the 2025 strike of the Air Canada flight attendants. Ottawa used Section 107 and directed the Canada Industrial Relations Board toward binding arbitration. The dispute became about more than Air Canada. Canadians started arguing about the government's power to intervene in a legal strike.
But there is another side to this.
Jobs Minister Patty Hajdu says the government's coming changes are supposed to reduce government intervention, not increase it.
She says employers and workers should settle their own disputes whenever possible. Ottawa has been looking at changes involving bargaining periods, mediation, strike and lockout notices, arbitration and Section 107 itself.
And the government has a problem unions do not have to solve alone.
Imagine Canada's railways shutting down.
A farmer needs to ship grain. A factory in Oshawa is waiting for parts. Stores are waiting for products. A small business has customers waiting for orders.
None of those people are sitting at the bargaining table.
The same thing happens when a major airline or port shuts down. A fight between workers and an employer can quickly become everybody's problem.
So when should the government step in?
That is where this gets interesting.
If Ottawa moves too quickly, workers may wonder whether they really have a right to strike.
If Ottawa waits too long, millions of Canadians and businesses could pay the price for a dispute they had nothing to do with.
There is no easy answer.
That is especially worth remembering here in Oshawa.
This city was built by working people. Many belonged to unions. They fought for better wages, safer workplaces, pensions and benefits. Some of those fights were not pretty.
But they changed working life.
We also have to be careful about saying something has happened before it actually has. The final legislation has not been presented, so we do not know exactly what Parliament will eventually approve.
For now, the government says it wants fewer interventions.
Unions are worried the changes could weaken their bargaining power.
Both sides know something important is coming.
So maybe this is one for the coffee table.
When a strike begins hurting the rest of the country, should Ottawa step in?
And if the government can end a strike when the pressure becomes too great, how much power does a strike really have?
Pull up a chair.
I have a feeling this conversation is just getting started.

Less Canada, More Foreign Capital: The Hypocrisy of Carney's Quest for Foreign Investment

By Nick Kossovan

At Tuesday's inaugural Canada Investment Summit, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney delivered a masterclass in political sleight of hand, unveiling his headline capital expenditure tax policy. Carney pitched Canada as a secure economic safe harbour, now, to no one's surprise, aggressively seeking to attract global capital, including deep-pocketed American investors, to Canadian megaprojects.
Carney hailed his fiscal package as a patriotic step toward true national independence. The truth, however, becomes clear once you strip away the rhetoric. While technically applicable to any business currently operating in Canada, Carney's asset-stripper tax write-off maneuver is an exercise in appeasing Canadians' anxieties about the Canadian economy's direction. In contrast to Carney's claims of bolstering the domestic economy, his initiative is an extravagant, multimillion-dollar corporate handout to foreign private equity firms and multinational corporations capable of initiating massive capital-expenditure surges on their own, funded by Canadians and businesses that elected Carney to look after their best interests.
A key component of Carney's corporate welfare opus is the Productivity Mega Deduction. This policy aims to turbocharge capital spending through sweeping fiscal measures:
· Instant Write-Offs: Instead of writing off major equipment and building costs over many years, companies can now deduct 100% of the cost in the first year.
· Everything Covered: Approximately 65% of business assets are eligible for write-off, including oil pipelines, corporate jets, and factory machinery.
· Permanent Tax Breaks: These write-offs will remain permanent, creating a structural tax shelter.
· The Lowest Tax Rate: Under this plan, Canada will have the lowest tax rate in the G7 at 6.4%, half that of the US.
· A $36-Billion Gamble: Canadian taxpayers are expected to pay $36 billion over five years to chase $1 trillion in investment. At a post-announcement press conference, Carney defended this staggering giveaway with a rationalization that revealed a profound disconnect from everyday economic reality: "If we're in a race… we're ahead on the incentives, but we have ground to catch up. And what does this mean for Canadians and catching up to that ground? It means more jobs. It means a stronger country. It means more resilience, more independence, more sovereignty." It's a neat trick to equate corporate welfare for foreign multinationals with national pride. In an interview after the summit, Centre for Future Work economist Jim Stanford bluntly noted that foreign investment should not be the goal, adding, "we should be looking at these opportunities, carefully, judging them, negotiating with foreign investors to make sure the net benefit to Canada is as positive as it can be."
Instead of cautious pragmatism, Carney has opened the vault. A $36 billion tax write-off for multinational private equity firms and Wall Street asset managers, many of whom would have deployed capital anyway, amounts to a reckless corporate handout. Consequently, billionaire balance sheets are financed by Canadian taxpayers and struggling families, while public services are underfunded.
Furthermore, claiming "national sovereignty" while selling off Canada's economic infrastructure to foreigners is exceedingly hypocritical. Carney's strategy of trading the US, Canada's primary external economic master since Confederation, for multiple others is his bid to mitigate American trade friction while locking Canada into a permanent state of offshore dependency. By rolling out the red carpet for foreign conglomerates while leaving domestic businesses to grapple with persistent inflation, high operating costs, trade and tariff uncertainty, and regulatory burdens, Carney is engaging in nothing more than empty economic tokenism. He wants the political optics of standing up to Washington while pandering to foreign boardrooms—"Look at what I'm doing for Canadians!"—ensuring that Canada remains structurally and economically "less Canada." If Carney truly wanted to build a resilient economy, he'd look inward. Canadian prosperity won't come from the transient whims of global asset allocators; rather, it will come from entrepreneurs, business owners, employers, and Canadians who don't feel as financially stressed as they do today. Providing aggressive tax incentives and deep tax cuts for established Canadian businesses would build organic, homegrown wealth that stays within Canada's borders. Instead, Canadian businesses watch with frustration and anger as Carney grants preferential treatment and fast-tracked reviews to foreign corporations, while treating Canadians like second-class citizens in their own country. The math doesn't add up. Canadian taxpayers will ultimately bear the $36 billion shortfall through reduced public services or future tax hikes. However, Carney's tax enticement has one major problem: Because he failed to secure a long-term trade deal with the US, exporting goods across the border has, for the most part, become cost-prohibitive, a significant deterrent. No amount of tax wizardry can hide the fact that foreign companies have little substantive reason to set up shop in Canada beyond skimming short-term subsidies and flying away. Ultimately, Carney is playing a shell game, trading taxpayer money and national sovereignty for foreign approval. By prioritizing foreign conglomerates over Canadian companies, he's locking Canada into permanent economic subordination. As long as Ottawa chases global capital ghosts instead of supporting Canadians who live, work, and bleed here, the Canadian economy will remain nothing more than a branch of foreign boardrooms.