

May 21, 2024

Ginette Brazeau, Chairperson
Canada Industrial Relations Board
C.D. Howe Building
240 Sparks Street, 4th Floor West
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0X8

Re: Board file no. 037674-C (Maintenance of activities at CN during labour disruption)

Dear Chair Brazeau,

The NSBA – Saskatoon’s Business Association is a member-driven and focused organization that serves, promotes, and protects business throughout Saskatoon and beyond. Although our origins and roots are in Saskatoon's north end, today we encompass far more than that. From its grassroots origins of a handful of businesses, today the NSBA membership consists of over 750 businesses, ranging from single owner-operator proprietorships to large multinational corporations that employ thousands. Despite this diversity, there is a core element in the NSBA membership centered on industrial service and supply.

That being said, I am writing on behalf of our 750-plus members to provide our perspective on the critical issue of maintaining key railway services during potential labour disruptions at CN.

Importance of Continued Railway Services

As an export-reliant province, Saskatchewan's economy relies heavily on the efficient and uninterrupted operation of railway services. CN plays an important role in transporting goods essential to various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and mining. Any disruption to rail services could have severe consequences for businesses in our province, particularly those dependent on timely shipments of raw materials and finished goods.

Even short-term disruptions can lead to significant financial losses and operational challenges for our members and businesses. For instance, delays in shipping agricultural products during peak seasons can result in missed market opportunities. Similarly, manufacturing sectors rely on just-in-time delivery systems, and any interruption can halt production lines, leading to workforce reductions and added economic challenges.

Economic Impact on Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's diverse economy, encompassing key industries such as mining, agriculture, and manufacturing, is heavily reliant on the rail network to access national and international markets.

The province's potash industry, in particular, is a major contributor to both the local and national economy. Disruptions in rail services could impede the movement of potash to global markets, jeopardizing the industry's stability and competitiveness. It's even more critical in today's geopolitical climate, where Saskatchewan's commodities including potash, uranium, and grain, for example, are seen as safe and ethically sourced products.

The broader economic impact of a labour disruption at CN extends beyond individual businesses. It affects the overall economic health of our province, potentially leading to job losses, reduced economic output, and decreased tax revenues. Such outcomes would be detrimental not only to businesses but also to the communities they support.

In closing, the NSBA strongly advocates for the continuation of essential rail services during labour disruptions to protect the economic well-being of Saskatchewan and Canada as a whole. Ensuring that critical goods and commodities can still be transported is essential to maintaining economic stability, and environmental sustainability.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this critical issue. We appreciate the Board's efforts to consider the broader impacts of rail service disruptions.

Sincerely,



Keith Moen
Executive Director