



Montreal, June 13, 2024

Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology
the Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Subject: Bill C-58 – CPSC-CUPE's Response to Telus' Intervention on June 10, 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Provincial Council of the Communications Sector (CPSC) of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) represents approximately 5,000 unionized workers at Cogeco, Telus, and Vidéotron in Quebec.

The CPSC wishes to respond to certain elements of the letter sent by Telus to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (SOCl) on June 10, 2024.

The letter specifically mentions that Telus is categorically opposed to Bill C-58, which « ...attempts to solve a problem that does not exist¹. »

The CPSC opposes this assertion. If the problem does not exist, how can we explain the lockouts of more than seven months at Vidéotron in Gatineau and over 20 months for the dockworkers at the Port of Quebec? In total, nearly 300 families are left without employment while replacement workers perform their tasks. This practice unbalances the power dynamics between unions and employers and unduly prolongs labor disputes.

Bill C-58 is far from perfect, but from our perspective, it would at least have the advantage of somewhat restoring balance at the negotiation table.

According to Telus, C-58 would pose a risk to the continuity of telecommunications services in the country « ...removing the ability to assign employees between workplaces during labor dispute... » The company also asserts that the work of Telus's approximately 4,000 unionized employees is necessary to maintain daily and essential operations.

¹ Lettre de Telus, p. 1.

In the opinion of the members we represent, the continuity of telecommunications services in the country is not threatened by Bill C-58.

It should be noted that first-line response at Telus is mostly performed from abroad, primarily by workers located in the following countries: Morocco, Philippines, Romania, Bulgaria, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

We respectfully submit that the outsourcing of sensitive functions outside the country poses greater risks to telecommunications networks and our personal data than the possibility of a strike or lockout in Canada, especially in the tense geopolitical context we have known in recent years.

Telus is, in fact, the champion of job outsourcing as shown in the following table. The Canadian company has more workers abroad than in Canada, and the number of its unionized employees is constantly decreasing.

Unionized Jobs vs. Total Jobs at Telus 2014-2023

UNION at Telus	2014	...	2023	Unionized Jobs Lost
SQET Unionized	845	...	625	220
SAMT Unionized	665	...	470	195
STT Unionized	10735	...	3980	6755
BC Unionized	0	...	99	0
ADT Unionized	0	...	250	0
Total Unionized Employees	12245	...	5424	6821

WORK LOCATION of Telus Employees	2014	...	2023	Additional Positions
Employees in Canada	27900	...	30900	3000
Employees Abroad	15800	...	75500	59700
Total Workforce	43700	...	106400	62700

Sources: Telus, Annual Reports, 2014 to 2022 and Telus, Management Report, Q4 2023.

Just yesterday, 5 positions were abolished in one of our local sections, while 360 others had already been abolished at the beginning of the year in Quebec.

At Vidéotron, a call center in Egypt has been expanded since the beginning of the conflict, and employees have been forced to work overtime to compensate for the absence of unionized employees at the Gatineau call center. Subcontractors continue to work on the ground in Quebec, which slows down network development but does not impair the services offered by the company.

Bill C-58, far from preventing these practices, still allows employers to hire additional personnel up until the date of the notice of negotiation, which has been presented as a perfect recipe for maintaining the imbalance of power in favor of employers by several stakeholders in the House of Commons, including the FTQ. To be truly effective, Bill C-58 should also include a monitoring mechanism to fine employers who use replacement workers both domestically and abroad.

In conclusion, contrary to Telus, the CPSC believes that an enhanced Bill C-58 would strengthen the resilience of telecommunications infrastructure in Canada by reducing the duration of labor disputes and the use of tactics that put our networks at risk.

Rather than rejecting this bill outright, we invite the Committee to consider our comments to ensure that Bill C-58 protects telecommunications services while respecting the rights of workers. We urge the Senate to consider these arguments and move forward with a balanced and fair perspective.

Hoping everything is in order, we remain,

Yours sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tulsa Valin-Landry', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tulsa Valin-Landry
President, CPSC
VP, CUPE-Quebec