

June 1, 2006

Honourable Mike de Jong  
Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC  
V8V 1X4

**VIA FAX: 250-356-6595**

Dear Minister,

The BC and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council has learned that the lead contractor in the construction of twin tunnels for the new Richmond-Vancouver-Airport, Rapid Transit Canada Line, SLCP-SELI Joint Ventures, has hired approximately 60 Temporary Foreign Workers. The majority of these workers are Costa Rican, with several Colombian and Peruvians. Wages for these workers range between \$1,000 to \$3,000 USD per month, but in fact the majority of the workers are earning less than \$1,300 USD per month. The workers are required to work between nine and eleven hours per day, six days a week (between 54 to 66 hours per week). There is no overtime pay. Most workers are being paid less than \$5 per hour. Room and board and flights to Canada, for the workers, are paid by the employer.

In the months preceding the hire of these foreign workers, representatives from the Construction Specialized Workers' Union Local 1611 and the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 115 were in discussions with the employer to arrange an agreement that would have seen the employment of Canadian construction crews. The Canadian workers have more than adequate skills to ensure quality, efficient product and safe practices for the nature of the work involved. The CSWU Local 1611 and IUOE 115 have trained construction crews to work with Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) equipment involved in this project. The nature of the work was not an obstacle to the capabilities of the construction crews that would have been provided by CSWU Local 1611 and the IUOE 115.

Further, a member of the CSWU Local 1611 was hired by the employer as the General Foreman in the early days of the project. This Canadian worker organized the site preparation and offered to provide the employer with an entire Canadian crew to carry out the complete project. During these early stages of the project, the General Foreman, was involved in negotiating his own wage and compensation package with the employer. This Canadian worker asked for market rates for his occupation. The General Foreman was then informed that his wage and benefit proposals were, along with the rest of Canadian workers, "too high" and that the company would be looking for more affordable workers offshore.

The foreign workers on this high profile public infrastructure project with federal and provincial funding are not receiving minimum wage compensation as required under the *Employment Standards Act*. I urge the Minister of Labour to carry out a full investigation of payroll and other employment standards to ensure that all terms and conditions under the *Employment Standards Act* are being met.

I look forward to your prompt response to these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

WAYNE PEPPARD  
Executive Director

WP/lmb  
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cc: Hon. Kevin Falcon, Minister of Transportation  
Chuck Puchmayr, MLA, NDP Labour Critic  
David Chucnovsky, MLA, NDP Transportation Critic  
Pat Jacobson, CEO Translink  
Jane Bird, Project Director RAVCO