



Fairness. Opportunity. Prosperity.

November 13, 2025

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa, ON
Via email to: mark.carney@parl.gc.ca

RE: OPEN AND FAIR PROCUREMENT TO BUILD THE PROJECTS CANADA NEEDS

Dear Prime Minister Carney,

Canada's construction industry is one of the great engines of our economy. **Every day, more than 1.6 million skilled men and women – most of them working in open shop or progressive unions/open managed companies – build the infrastructure that keeps our country moving.** They pour the concrete, weld the steel, and raise the towers that define our skylines, connect our communities, and develop the natural resources that power our nation. Yet despite their skill and dedication, they are too often told they aren't welcome on government-funded projects simply because they don't belong to the "right" union.

That must end.

We are calling on your government to reject any attempt to impose building trades union (BTU)-only Project Labour Agreements (PLAs) or Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs), as well as any prevailing wage schemes akin to the Investment Tax Credit, which presumes BTU wages and benefits as a sole basis, on federally funded projects.

These schemes are not about "community benefits." They are about exerting political influence, rewarding a narrow group of insiders, and denying opportunities for the large majority of workers and contractors to bid and build projects.

British Columbia offers a cautionary tale. Since 2018, the NDP government's CBA model has forced workers to join a small group of building trades unions before they can step foot on a provincial project. In theory, it was supposed to boost local hiring and apprenticeships. In reality, it has been a disaster. Projects delayed by years, more than \$1.7 billion in cost overruns (and counting), and fewer bidders and workers. The vast majority of skilled tradespeople – the 85% of B.C. construction professionals who choose to work in companies unaffiliated with the building trades unions – have been locked out of jobs they pay for with their own taxes.

This flawed model is spreading, not due to its success, but due to political pandering of NDP governments. Manitoba has just embraced a similar policy. In Manitoba, more than 70% of the

construction industry are not a member of a building trades union, and now they are being cut out of various projects – leaving taxpayers to unnecessarily bear more cost.

Workers lose opportunities and jobs, and taxpayers have paid more and gotten less. That's not fairness. That's political favouritism dressed up as public policy.

More than 70% of Canada's construction workforce are not affiliated with the traditional building trades unions. These are proud workers who earn good wages, enjoy strong benefits, and build world-class projects safely and efficiently. Some are members of progressive, non-BTU unions, while most work in non-union environments. The contractors who employ these workers sponsor far more apprentices and conduct more professional development than the BTUs. They compete on skill and merit, not political connections. They should never be told their tax dollars are good enough to fund a project, but their hands aren't good enough to build it.

Closed PLAs and other BTU-only agreements also harm Indigenous-owned construction and resource development companies. Across Canada, hundreds of Indigenous businesses – operating primarily as non-union – have built successful partnerships with open managed and open shop contractors, training local apprentices, creating employment in remote communities, and keeping profits and expertise within their Nations. These enterprises are a vital part of reconciliation in action – fostering local economic independence and community capacity rather than dependency.

When closed PLAs are imposed, it is akin to Indigenous contractors being told by the government who they have to partner with, or be excluded altogether from bidding, unless they agree to transfer their workers into specific building trades unions that may have little or no representation in their regions. This is yet another barrier preventing Indigenous companies from competing on equal footing and undermines the spirit and intent of economic reconciliation that governments at every level have pledged to uphold.

Your government has said it wants to double the pace of homebuilding and expand public infrastructure to meet the needs of Canadians, make our economy more competitive, attract investment, incentivize innovation and build a stronger country. The starting point for this ambition cannot be to divide workers, telling most they are not welcome and denying them jobs and opportunity.

To build more, build faster and build affordably, we need every qualified contractor and every worker at the table, no matter how their workforce is organized. Open bidding demonstrably delivers better value, more competition, and stronger communities.

Prime Minister, **this is a defining moment for fairness and fiscal responsibility in public construction.** Canadians are watching how their government spends their money. If you truly believe in value for taxpayer dollars, competition, economic reconciliation, and opportunity, the answer is simple: keep public projects open to all qualified workers and contractors, regardless of union affiliation.

Canada builds best without special deals for a few and when everyone gets a fair shot. Let's meet the challenges we face today by giving everyone the same opportunity to help build a stronger Canada.

We would welcome the opportunity for further dialogue on this issue and our concerns. Please use Jordan Bateman of the Independent Contractors and Businesses Association at jordan@icba.ca as a first point of contact for this letter from our undersigned Indigenous, labour, construction resource development and business organizations, which together represent more than a million workers across every province and region of Canada.

Sincerely,

MERIT CANADA
NATIONAL COALITION OF CHIEFS
FIRST NATIONS NATURAL GAS ALLIANCE
CLAC (CHRISTIAN LABOUR ASSOCIATION OF CANADA)
CANADIAN IRON, STEEL AND INDUSTRIAL WORKERS UNION
ALL NATIONS UNITED
PROGRESSIVE CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS AND BUSINESSES ASSOCIATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS AND BUSINESSES ASSOCIATION ALBERTA
ALBERTA ENTERPRISE GROUP
MERIT CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN
SASKATCHEWAN HEAVY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION
ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN
CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN
MERIT MANITOBA
MERIT ONTARIO
MERIT NOVA SCOTIA

CC:

- The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- The Honourable Gregor Robertson, Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada
- The Honourable Eleanor Olszewski, Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience and Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada
- The Honourable Rebecca Chartrand, Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- The Honourable Tim Hodgson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources
- The Honourable Shafqat Ali, Minister of the Treasury Board

- The Honourable Pierre Poilievre, Leader of His Majesty's Official Opposition
- Larry Brock, Shadow Minister for Justice and the Attorney General of Canada
- Scott Aitchison, Shadow Minister for Housing
- Tako van Popta, Associate Shadow Minister for Pacific Economic Development Canada
- Dane Lloyd, Shadow Minister for Emergency Management and Community Resilience
- Bob Zimmer, Shadow Minister for Northern and Arctic Affairs and the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- Shannon Stubbs, Shadow Minister for Energy and Natural Resources
- Stephanie Kusie, Shadow Minister for Treasury Board