

DHL Express Canada seeks exemption on use of replacement workers

Parcel carrier forced to suspend operations as labor dispute escalates

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by [Eric Kulisch](#)



The DHL Express Canada headquarters building is located in Brampton, Ontario. Management has asked the Canadian government to intervene in its labor dispute with Unifor. (Photo: Shutterstock/JHVEPhoto)

DHL Express has asked Canada's government to exempt it from new legislation banning federally regulated employers from hiring replacement workers during strikes or lockouts, saying a cessation of parcel delivery operations would significantly harm businesses and communities at a time of high economic uncertainty.

DHL Express Canada late Tuesday stopped accepting new packages and [will suspend operations Friday](#), when the new law takes effect, in response to a work stoppage over deadlocked contract talks with unionized workers. It initially called in strikebreakers to maintain service levels after a lockout-strike moratorium expired on June 8 and both sides took action.

In a letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney and Patty Hajdu, the minister of jobs and families, DHL Express Canada said the prohibition on replacement workers shuts off a vital trade link for more than 50,000 international shipments per day, including pharmaceuticals and e-commerce products, that industries and consumers depend on. The letter was signed by Andrew Williams, the CEO of DHL Express Americas, and Geoff Walsh, CEO of DHL Express Canada, who urged Ottawa to intervene — [as it recently did in the ongoing Canada Post labor dispute](#).

"We respectfully request ... the government's intervention under section 107 of the Canada Labor Code to allow DHL Express to continue operating while we negotiate in good faith with the union. We have witnessed similar interventions during the ongoing strike at Canada Post, and we believe such action is warranted in our case, given that we provide essential logistics services to Canadians. This intervention is critical not only for the survival of DHL Express in Canada but also for the thousands of Canadians and businesses that rely on our services. Our commitment is to continuing bargaining in good faith, and we are confident that a balanced approach to labor relations can be achieved without resorting to measures that could jeopardize the livelihoods of many," the DHL executives wrote.

Unifor, the union representing about 2,100 independent couriers, truck drivers, warehouse pickers and clerical workers at DHL, [posted the letter on its website](#). It castigated DHL Express for seeking special treatment from a law designed to protect workers in collective bargaining.