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Employers Alarmed at Potential for Provincial Replacement Worker Provisions

--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 28th, 2007, St. John's, NL – Employers are alarmed today after hearing that the province is considering replacement worker legislation, which would ban the use of replacement workers during labour disputes. Commenting on this situation, Marilyn Tucker, President of the Newfoundland & Labrador Employers' Council said, "It would be discouraging if the province were to consider such legislation that would destroy the balance of power that exists between employers and unions during a labour dispute."

This is not the first time the Employers' Council has been working on behalf of its members to fend off replacement worker legislation. Council lobbied, along with many employer groups across the country, to have replacement worker legislation defeated at the federal level for the twelfth time recently. "The fact that this continues to appear and continues to be struck down, speaks clearly to the point that replacement worker legislation is not good legislation. Not only would it take us back a century in the progress that we've made in labour relations in this province, it could seriously impact our economy, the survival of businesses, employment, the community, and many other stakeholder groups", Tucker further commented.

Current labour legislation balances the rights of workers to withdraw their services with the rights of employers to operate their businesses. Both parties experience major inconvenience, difficulty, and expense. Workers are permitted to receive income in the form of strike pay, and employers are permitted to operate their business as best they can, using managers and supervisors. Further, in jurisdictions that have such legislation, it has been necessary to seek a balance in labour relations power by such measures as restricting the unions' right to pay strike pay, limiting the access to loan insurances that kick in during strikes, limiting the conditions of picketing, and other such actions.

Similar legislation has caused great difficulty in British Columbia, and replacement worker legislation was repealed in Ontario because of the difficulty it created. "Newfoundland & Labrador currently has the weakest labour relations climate in the country, and replacement worker legislation would only further exacerbate our union-management relations," Tucker pointed out. "We contend this issue has arisen due to recent incidents of violence on the picket line, not because employers are abusing the use of replacement workers. The issue that must be remedied is violence, so introducing replacement worker legislation would create a whole other set of problems because we tried to fix something that wasn't broken", concluded Tucker.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Employers' Council is the lead business advocacy group on labour and employment-related issues.

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