

February 22, 2019

## CUPW SUPPORTS MONTREAL BIKE COURIERS

Last week, QA Courier, a bike courier company in Montreal fired five of its six bike couriers for walking off the job. The couriers refused to work because a winter storm, which dropped 40 cm of snow on the city, made their working conditions unsafe.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and its 50,000 members, stand in solidarity with these five couriers.

The couriers currently work as contractors on commission and although they uniquely work for QA Courier, they are not considered employees, and therefore do not enjoy any of the privileges held by employees, including the right to refuse work, sick leave, vacation and benefits. They must also pay for bike maintenance and repairs from their own pockets.

These workers ride an average of 50 to 75 km a day, braving Montreal traffic and extreme weather, without any of the safeguards and benefits of salaried employees. All they want is to be recognized as employees and be treated with respect.

The mail and parcel industry is thriving but at what cost? Postal workers understand all too well how it feels to be treated like machines instead of humans by their employer. We understand working for an employer who values profits over the health and safety of its workers. We walk the same snowy streets and face the same extreme weather conditions as these bike couriers and know first-hand how unsafe the conditions can be.

We will stand with these five workers as they not only fight for their rights but those of all bike messengers who will no longer accept to be anything but full-fledge employees.

To better understand the situation, we invite you to read the couriers' statement below which was originally published on the Montreal Bike Messengers Association page.

Mike Palecek  
National President

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*To whom it may concern,  
We are a team of five bike messengers working for QA Courier in Montreal, and we're in a bad situation right now.*

*On Wednesday, February 13th, 5 of the 6 bike messengers at QA were fired.*

*On this day ~30cm of snow fell in Montreal overnight, and before the snow plows were able to pass, cycling was virtually impossible. Management was unresponsive to our request to simply walk deliveries within the downtown core and to leave the longer trips to cars. Many other courier companies shut down for the day, and it seemed we were some of the very few who were expected to work in such dangerous conditions. Every school and university in the city was closed, and even the municipal authorities recommended that everyone stay home. Our bosses became irritated when deliveries became late because of our inability to perform in the snow storm, and so our response was to collectively refuse to work immediately and demand a conversation about our worker's rights. This was met with all 5 of us being fired on the spot.*

*You may not be aware, but it's common practice in the courier industry for companies to not hire actual employees, but instead to have "Independent Contractors". This means we are technically self-employed, even though we work for the same company 5 days a week, report to a manager, have company ID's, have our hours set for us, and have no control over the conditions of our contract (ie. delivery rates and scheduling).*

*This means we are without employee status, and so don't receive basic rights such as sick days, vacation pay, CSST (with some exceptions), or the right to refuse work in dangerous conditions. We're also only earning roughly \$14/hr before work related expenses (food, bike parts and repairs, bi-weekly company phone fee, etc.) to ride an average of 50-75 km per day through heavy traffic, in any and all weather conditions.*

*Right now we're trying to negotiate better terms with management at QA, who want us to return to work on our old contract with no changes. Our only demand from them is employee status, and refuse to accept anything less. We believe our old contract inaccurately defines our worker status, and we're prepared to take legal action though the IWW if necessary.*

*On February 15, QA posted an ad on their Facebook page offering a \$25/day increase on our current salary and a \$250 signing bonus for new hires, which is not being offered to us. It's since been deleted due to public backlash on the post (we have records of this).*

*We're asking for support from anyone in the industry, the bike community or the general public with concerns for worker's rights. We have contacted the press, who will be joining us Monday, February 18, at 7:30 am in front of the QA office at 1100 Beaver Hall. We are doing this not only for ourselves, but to set a precedent for the courier industry as a whole. With any luck, other businesses will take notice and improve conditions for all bike messengers in Montreal.*

*Please let us know if you would be interested supporting our cause. You can contact us at [info@montrealbma.com](mailto:info@montrealbma.com)*

*Best,*

*Alex, Benoit, Brett, Francis, Julien  
The QA Bike Messenger Team*