



March 1, 2024

The Hon. Mélanie Joly, PC, MP  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
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Dear Minister:

**Subject: 2 Years into Russia's Illegal Invasion, Support the People of Ukraine**

On behalf of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), which represents more than 425,000 workers across Canada, I am writing to you regarding Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and ongoing concerns in the country.

The destruction, death, and displacement caused by the invasion are extremely distressing. As we are now 2 years into the war, it is important that international attention not wane.

**Welcoming Refugees**

I applaud Canada's welcoming of Ukrainian refugees during this time.

I encourage you to continue to open Canada's doors to refugees affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine—and to extend the same compassion to asylum seekers from other regions of the world affected by conflict. In addition, Canada must ensure there are supports and services in place when people arrive.

**Work Towards an End to the Hostilities**

I implore you to continue to call for, and work towards, an end to Russia's invasion and to put pressure on Putin's government accordingly.

It is essential that the Canadian government work to ensure that Russia immediately withdraws its troops from Ukraine. Russia must end its violent invasion, and those responsible for war crimes must be held accountable.



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*In your support of Ukraine, I urge you to emphasize solutions that help prevent further bloodshed and open a path towards lasting peace and security for the people in Ukraine—and the people in Russia, as well as in the broader region.*

Indeed, it is working people, their families, and communities that are impacted the most by conflict. In times of war, workers are called on to continue providing critical services.

As a union representing public service workers, NUPGE is in solidarity with our counterparts in Ukraine who are responding to emergencies, treating the injured and delivering aid, keeping services running, and rebuilding from the destruction. We also express solidarity with the many Russians who are opposed to the war, yet are treating the wounded or losing loved ones in combat. In addition to the tens of thousands of deaths and millions of Ukrainians displaced, there have been millions who have lost their jobs.

### **Supporting Ukraine Means Supporting Working People**

At a time when working people are on the front lines of the war, I am concerned about Ukraine's recent labour reforms that undermine workers' rights and protections ([ITUC](#)). A majority of Ukrainians' working conditions are now dictated by individual employment contracts, instead of being determined by the national labour code. This leaves workers even more vulnerable. In addition, unions [report](#) lack of social dialogue and government hostility towards their activities.

Although the 2022 labour reforms are in effect only as long as the country is under martial law, unions have raised concerns about these laws becoming normalized in the long term. The government has passed additional reforms, such as permitting precarious zero-hours contracts, which will remain in place after the war. Furthermore, unions have cautioned that the merger of Ukraine's national social insurance and pension funds could lead to a reduction or an end to benefits for workers who are unable to work or are injured on the job, and could pave the way to privatization.

Ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine is paramount. It is also important that the ongoing war does not result in reforms that undermine workers' rights and human rights in the long term. I ask you to raise these matters with your Ukrainian counterparts in your engagements during this time. Protecting workers' rights and a strong labour movement will be critical to rebuilding from the invasion and essential to a democratic and peaceful future for Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bert Blundon  
President

cc: Daniel Bertossa, General Secretary, Public Services International  
Jason MacLean, Secretary-Treasurer, NUPGE  
National Executive Board