

# Canada Weekly

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## Parliament recalled to end national railway strike

*In a nation-wide television broadcast on August 27, the Prime Minister announced that Parliament would be recalled as soon as possible to legislate an end to a four-day old national rail strike. Non-operating railway employees had walked off the job after a month of "rotating walkouts" and attempts to work out a satisfactory agreement had failed. Mr. Trudeau's statement follows:*

I want to speak to you tonight as Prime Minister of a country that must deal quickly with a national emergency.

That emergency is the rail strike.... A rotating strike which has now become general.... A dispute which continues, despite our most intense efforts to negotiate its end.... A dispute which is hurting Canadians everywhere.

Tonight, I have asked the Speaker to recall the House of Commons at the earliest possible date, to legislate an end to this paralysis of our railway system. The Government will ask Parliament to pass legislation providing for the restoration of rail service, through a process that would be fair and equitable to all parties.

We reached this decision with reluctance. It is not a light thing to interfere with the free determination of wages and working conditions between labour and management. Until last week, the people of Canada — with considerable fortitude — managed to live with the pressures and inconveniences of rotating strikes. But last Thursday, the strike became general. This nation-wide rail service interruption is now causing serious damage; we can *not* live with such disruptions any longer.

— For instance, on Vancouver Island, in the provinces of Newfoundland and

In the early hours of September 1, Parliament passed emergency legislation to ease the national rail strike.

The Maintenance of Railway Operations Act 1973, which ordered some 56,000 non-operating railway employees back to work, provides wage increases based on a conciliation board report that had been rejected previously by the unions. The increases are: 34 cents an hour retroactive to January 1, 6.5 per cent next January 1 and a further 1.5 per cent on July 1, 1974.

Prince Edward Island and many parts of the North, entire communities are isolated, or risk being cut off.

— In many industrial and resource areas of Canada, thousands of workers are being laid off, and several key plants are about to close down entirely. Small businessmen are also imperilled in their ability to operate.

— At a time when all Canadians are vigorously determined to control the prices we pay for food, the rail strike is jeopardizing the efficient movement of grains and fresh meats; in a few areas, food is reported to be in danger of rotting in boxcars.

Over the weekend, the Minister of Labour, Mr. Munro, made final and intensive efforts to persuade the parties to settle the dispute. Following an appraisal from the Minister of Labour this morning, the Cabinet decided to permit negotiations to continue for a few more hours...since there appeared to be some new hope for a quick settlement. Tonight, that hope has gone.

If the stoppage continues much longer, serious damage could result to the national economy, and to Canadians as consumers. This the Federal Government cannot allow to happen. The Government has therefore been obliged to assert the interest of the country as a whole, over the individual rights and interests of the parties to the dispute.

In recalling Parliament, our first priority will be the immediate restoration of rail service throughout Canada. I also want to assure the railway unions and managements that the Government will continue to respect their interests. Of course, any settlement must also be equitable to the interests of *all* Canadians. I am sure that will be Parliament's concern, and I hope it will be the concern of the railways and unions as well.