



TEAM-IFPTE Local 161

February 16, 2024

The Honourable Hedy Fry
Chair, Canadian Parliament's Heritage Committee
Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Canada

Dear Honourable Hedy Fry and Members of the Heritage Committee,

I am writing on behalf of TEAM Union, IFPTE Local 161, representing over 500 members across Manitoba, to raise grave concerns regarding the recent announcement by Bell Canada to cut approximately 4,800 positions, constituting 9% of the company's workforce. This decision will undoubtedly have a severe impact on Manitobans, including our members.

TEAM Union, established in 1970, comprises Manitobans employed by Bell Canada across various fields, including IT, Network Engineering, Sales, Marketing, Business Administration, and Finance. As Local 161 of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), representing 90,000 members in Canada and the USA, we are deeply committed to protecting the interests and welfare of our members.

Since the acquisition of Manitoba Telecom Services (MTS), our union has witnessed a troubling erosion of local jobs. This stands in stark contrast to Bell's earlier commitment to Manitobans when it pledged to make Winnipeg the central hub for its Western Canadian operations in 2017. Instead, Bell has opted to diminish its presence as an employer in our province by reducing investments in maintenance and service expansion and implementing multiple rounds of job cuts.

We are profoundly disappointed to learn about yet another wave of job cuts and layoffs, particularly given the significant toll it takes on our workforce here in Manitoba. Moreover, the decision to provide a 3.1% dividend increase to shareholders at the same time only adds insult to injury. The elimination of these jobs, especially amidst existing stress, unsustainable workloads, and limited career opportunities, exacerbates the challenges faced by our membership.

Bell's justification for these cuts, citing a shift towards new growth areas and aligning costs to revenue potential, fails to acknowledge the human cost of such decisions. TEAM members have already endured years of cuts and restructuring since Bell's acquisition of MTS, resulting in a nearly 40% reduction in membership. This continuous erosion of jobs and resources has created a harmful work environment marked by insecurity and instability. Moreover, the loss of jobs has damaged our local economy,

particularly impacting remote and marginalized communities, while diminishing the future of telco jobs in Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada.

The telecommunications sector is not only an economic powerhouse but also a vital component of our cultural identity. It serves as a platform for the dissemination of Canadian content, including news, entertainment, and educational programming, that reflects the diversity and richness of our society. As such, any significant disruptions or cutbacks in this sector have far-reaching implications for our cultural heritage and national identity.

We firmly believe that the recent layoffs at Bell Canada warrant immediate attention and action from the Heritage Committee to safeguard our nation's cultural heritage and uphold the principles of social responsibility and economic fairness in the telecommunications industry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Eyjolfson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dave Eyjolfson
President
TEAM-IFPTE Local 161