



***For Immediate Release***

**July 11, 2017**

## **Sears lay-offs emphasize need for stronger worker protections**

The treatment of thousands of laid off Sears employees, under existing labour laws, highlights the need for stronger basic protections and employment standards for workers, says the New Brunswick Federation of Labour.

Sears Canada has recently announced that it will close 59 stores and lay off some 2,900 staff across the country. New Brunswick Federation of Labour president, Patrick Colford, is calling on the New Brunswick Federal Members of Parliament and the New Brunswick provincial government to do something to protect these employees.

New Brunswick Sears employees first felt the pain of job loss when some Sears stores were closed in 2015. Now, Sears Canada will be closing two more NB-based stores, in Saint John and Bathurst, and laying off just under 150 employees in the process.

Sears recently filed for bankruptcy (creditor) protection under federal law, and in doing so, is leaving its employees out in the cold. The company is trying to avoid its responsibility to pay severance to employees affected by the store closures. “It means that laid-off Sears employees, including many long-term staff who would otherwise be legally eligible for compensation, will receive nothing,” says NBFL President Patrick Colford, “and that’s wrong”.

Other former Sears employees who were receiving a severance as part of an earlier round of buyouts had their payments terminated. Creditor protection laws also allow companies to shirk their pension responsibilities.

“While Sears’ efforts to use creditor protection fall under federal—not provincial—laws and jurisdiction,” says Colford, “the circumstances highlight why basic protections for non-union workers need to be strengthened in a number of ways here in New Brunswick and across Canada.”

-30-

For additional information, please contact:  
Patrick Colford, NBFL President  
(506) 381-8969 (cell)