



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

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Java Blend illegally terminated Union supporters, according to legal complaint filed by SEIU Local 2

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA – Nine Java Blend employees, including the four leaders of a union drive, were illegally terminated last week according to an Unfair Labour Practice complaint filed by the Service Employees International Union. The employer’s conduct has all the hallmarks of an orchestrated campaign of retaliation aimed at crushing workers’ rights, according to the complaint.

The Unfair Labour Practice, filed this morning at the NS Labour Board reads:

“...by terminating union organizers in retaliation for organizing a union in their workplace. The Employer has enacted this retaliation under the guise of layoffs required to maintain financial stability. However, in doing so the Employer has terminated only twenty-five percent (25%) of the workforce, but a full one hundred percent (100%) of the Union’s organizing committee.”

Cailen Pygott had been working at Java Blend since June 2017, until his termination last week. He was a barista supervisor and one of the four Union leaders that was let go.

“One of the reasons we felt courageous enough to speak out and defend our rights is because of union support,” Pygott said at today’s press conference. “Java Blend will say they are facing mounting debt, but from my perspective, [that’s] inconsistent with terminating staff at its most lucrative cafe on North St.”

“Forming a Union was important because I deeply care about the well-being of my co-workers in the workplace,” said Andy Mawko, a barista who had been working for Java Blend since December 2019. He was also part of the mass termination, and one of the leaders of the Union drive.

“Over the four years I’ve worked there, I witnessed a lot of change in the company such as unfair scheduling and hours being cut,” said Mawko. “We knew that forming a Union was the only way we could do something about these issues.”

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At the January 23, 2024 termination meeting, “we were all then presented with a Non-Disclosure Agreement, which, if we had signed, would have provided additional termination pay, but also required us to keep all details confidential,” said Emily Kristensen. “However, our silence is not for sale.”

According to the legal complaint, this also violated the Trade Union Act.

“... the impacted workers, who are living paycheck-to paycheck, have been told that they will only receive desperately needed severance if they give up their rights under the Trade Union Act.”

Kristensen was also a barista supervisor and began working at Java Blend in October 2022. She was the main union leader at the Sackville St. location during the certification campaign and was also let go last week.

“Java Blend has been a pillar in many different communities for nearly a century” said Pygott, “and if this orchestrated attack can happen to us, it can happen to any other local cafe or business.”

As part of the remedy, SEIU Local 2 is seeking an immediate reinstatement of the nine individuals to their former positions and reimbursement for any and all lost wages and/or benefits.

A copy of the legal complaint and photos from today’s presser are at: <https://seiulocal2.ca/media-communicues>

Public Rally

The workers have invited the community to join them at a public rally on Saturday February 10 at 1 pm outside of Java Blend at 6027 North St.

Background

Java Blend Coffee Limited, is a roasting production and retail business that operates in four locations in the Halifax Regional Municipality including three cafes: Java Blend North Street, Java Blend Sackville Street and Cortado Tasting Bar. The Roastery and production outlet is located at 30 Borden Avenue in Dartmouth.

Employees from all the locations participated in a Labour Board certification vote on June 2, 2023. Eight months later, however, the ballot box remains sealed because the employer raised objections as to whom should be allowed to be members of the Union.

SEIU Local 2 represents 20,000 workers in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. We are proud members of the largest, fastest growing and most dynamic union in North America.

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