

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Canadian Teamsters Launch Effort To Organize Workers at FedEx Corp.

By Rip Watson
Senior Reporter

The Teamsters in Canada have begun a drive to organize thousands of FedEx Corp. workers,

beginning with the Express unit that carries and delivers overnight courier packages.

The union's statement said it was responding to requests from FedEx workers seeking the same working conditions and treatment as union

members at other Canadian courier companies. The Teamsters claim 14,000 members in Canada at the courier services.

FedEx did not respond to requests for comment on the union effort.

Stephane Lacroix, a spokesman

for the union, said organizing workers in Canada is easier than in the United States, with 29% of Canadian FedEx workers union members, compared with 12% in the United States.

Lacroix estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 Express workers could be eligible for union membership. Under Canadian law, when 50% plus one person sign union cards at a facility, the union becomes their bargaining representative. If

35% to 50% of workers sign the cards, Canada's Industrial Relations Board can call for an election at the facility.

"We are confident about organizing workers from this company," said Robert Bouvier, president of Teamsters Canada. "We will not tolerate interference from the employer in the unionization process."

The Teamsters have been mounting an organizing drive in the United States as well — so far without success. Only FedEx pilots are represented by a union, the Air Line Pilots Association.

At the U.S. FedEx Express unit, the company has been battling efforts to have Congress change legislation that governs FedEx Express workers who perform other services. At present, those workers are covered by the Railway Labor Act, while their counterparts at UPS Inc. are Teamsters covered by the National Labor Relations Act.

During the current session of Congress, the House has approved a shift of jurisdiction over those FedEx Express workers to match the regulations covering UPS workers, but the Senate has not acted on federal aviation legislation that includes the coverage shift.

So far, FedEx has blocked union organizing efforts at its Ground unit by defending the position that the workers are contractors rather than employees. The classification of those workers is the subject of multiple lawsuits in state and federal courts.

The union said it has created Web sites in English and French to provide information on the organizing effort in Canada.

Canadian Teamsters number 125,000 in the courier, freight and other industries. The Teamsters union's total North American membership is 1.4 million.