

CUPW Calls on the Government to Urgently Protect Gig Economy Workers

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OTTAWA – On Monday, May 11th, Foodora Couriers will work their last day as the company will officially exit the Canadian market. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) is fighting to ensure Foodora takes responsibility for its workers and demands that the Canadian federal government immediately intervene to protect vulnerable gig-workers, ensure couriers, including undocumented workers, are paid severance, and have adequate income supports.

There are over 1300 Foodora couriers (Foodsters) in the GTA, and over 3000 riders and drivers for Foodora across Canada. From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite couriers continuing to deliver as essential workers, Foodora has shown disregard for basic health protections with only “optional” distance delivery services, but never introduced measures to ensure its workers were safe. Workers never received any personal protective equipment, even as they delivered cold and flu medicine to customers.

“We have now seen the true face of the gig economy. Employers can pull up and leave without consequence. The fight isn’t over though, and Foodsters United will pursue every means necessary to protect those former foodora couriers and push the government to ensure these workers do not suffer financially,” explains Ivan Ostos, a dedicated Foodster.

Delivery Hero, the wealthy multinational parent company to Foodora, revealed their revenue has nearly doubled in the past year. Delivery Hero boasted these gains the day after Foodora announced its exit from the Canadian market due to alleged financial trouble. Foodora also owes Canadian business owners and creditors, including CRA and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board over \$4.7 M. Delivery Hero is also named as a creditor with a large amount, however couriers themselves are not currently listed as creditors that are owed in this process.

The decision to leave Canada comes in the middle of a global pandemic, and two months after Foodora couriers became the first gig workers in Canada to win the right to unionize. CUPW is calling on the Canadian government to hold this multinational corporation accountable as it tries to skirt its responsibilities towards workers in Canada.

“The federal government has a role to play in Bankruptcy proceedings in Canada – they can and must insist that couriers be paid severance in full. The government must ensure access to all income supports to all vulnerable gig workers,” says Jan Simpson, National President of CUPW.

Foodora couriers include some of the most vulnerable workers in the country. The precarious job market pushes them to work as many hours as possible to cash out at the end of the week

so that they can feed their families. Foodora couriers will now be left without severance pay, as Foodora continues to insist on considering couriers “independent contractors” despite the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruling that Foodora couriers are dependent contractors. As it stands, couriers are also not eligible for the federal Wage Earner Protection Program unless the Minister of Labour recognizes couriers as misclassified workers. The Canadian government must ensure all Foodora Couriers have access to emergency support during this pandemic, as Foodora and Delivery Hero have shamefully exploited the vulnerability of low-income, newcomers, and student workers, and now intend to walk away from their responsibilities.

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