



Nortel pensioners group lashes out after losing another round on Parliament Hill

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Strong words are surfacing after the Nortel pensioners group feels yet another loss in the battles of passing a federal bill.

Bill C-501 was stripped of any reference to pensions and pension-underfunding during its clause-by-clause review Tuesday.

Nortel pensioner representatives are calling it "a travesty of justice."

"The elimination of all clauses in Bill C-501 relating to pension funds is a devastating blow for Justice-in-Bankruptcy," said Bob Dowson. He is a Nortel pensioner living in Iroquois, Ontario. Dowson attends all the C-501 committee meetings with his wife Marilyn.

"We are facing the loss of our home while these guys play fast and loose with our lives. Would they still behave this way if their own parents were involved?"

As it now stands, Bill C-501 will only protect termination and severance pay. NDP and Liberal Committee members voted to retain pensioner protection but did not have the numbers to overcome the combined vote of the Conservative and Bloc members.

Disabled Nortel workers are not giving up as they try for a better deal from the collapse of the tech firm. This week they managed a one-on-one meeting with senior cabinet minister and Ottawa MP John Baird to talk about benefits.

Diane Urquhart a financial advisor acts on behalf of a group of about 40 of the some 400 disabled workers. She tells CTV News that she believes Baird was "acting in good faith, he knew most of the issues and is part of the process by the government to find some way to help the disabled."

The disabled lost all benefits at the end of December. Urquhart says Baird made it clear "there would not be legislation to provide help." She adds "I am still optimistic we will see a solution and it will be some kind of relief package (of money)."

Urquhart sent a letter to the federal, Ontario, Quebec and Alberta finance ministers Thursday. She calls for \$80 million to cover cash she contends was taken from a Nortel trust fund for the disabled and was never repaid. The group has also met with several Ontario politicians, plus federal opposition MPs and Industry Canada staff.

In one other development, a lawyer for the disabled will try to convince the Supreme Court to hear the case. They have lost all previous legal decisions seeking a better deal for the disabled.

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