



Unifor proposes modernization of Ontario labour laws to address precarious work

TORONTO, Oct. 27, 2015 - Unifor is proposing sweeping changes to Ontario employment standards and labour laws to better reflect the reality of modern work in an era of precarious, low-paying part-time jobs, and to give more Ontario workers a fair chance to form a union.

"Work today is becoming increasingly precarious. For more and more Ontarians, particularly young workers, the prospect of a job with regular hours – or even enough hours to support a family – seems out of reach," Unifor Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier said.

Unifor is releasing its submission to the Ontario government's Changing Workplace Review publicly today, the opening day of the annual Ontario Economic Summit in Niagara on the Lake. Fortier and Economist Jim Stanford will be at the Summit. Stanford will participate in a panel discussion Wednesday at 11am on The Changing Nature of Work, where he will discuss the union's recommendations.

In its 156-page submission to the Review, Unifor makes a total of 43 specific recommendations. Unifor's submission reflects input from Unifor locals across Ontario, many of which appeared before the advisors in public consultation meetings over the summer and fall.

Unifor's full submission includes several proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act, to provide better protection for workers facing precarious and irregular jobs. Unifor's proposals include: rules for shift scheduling that provide workers with more stability in scheduling and more opportunity for full-time work, making employers jointly responsible for the actions of temp agencies, access to prorated employment benefits (such as health and insurance protections) for part-time workers, and a more proactive and independent approach to the enforcement of employment standards (including greater scope for independent third-party investigations of ESA violations).

Proposed changes to the Labour Relations Act aim to modernize the process of union certification and first contract negotiation, including innovative proposals for the use of electronic union voting, holding certification votes in neutral locations, and expanded arbitration systems to help establish first contracts in newly-unionized workplaces. Unifor is also proposing the maintenance of union security and provisions when contracted services are flipped.

Unifor's submission also includes two very innovative proposals to attain a better balance between employers and workers in the era of precarious, unstable work. Unifor proposes that workers in non-union workplaces be given explicit legal protection to engage in collective action in pursuit of their economic objectives (mirroring similar protections that exist in U.S. law). The union has also developed a far-reaching proposal to establish sector-wide employment standards and contract provisions, covering both unionized and non-union workers, that would establish better employment practices in specific sectors facing especially unfavourable or insecure conditions (such as fast food workers or freelance workers).

"Too many workers today face a future of one bad, insecure job after another, often holding down more than one job at any one time as they try to make enough money. They are so dependent on those jobs that they are hesitant to speak out, as is their right, for fear they'll lose what work they have," Fortier said.

"The barriers to joining with co-workers to form a union thwart far too many workers. And a race to the bottom across whole sectors of our economy makes getting ahead all the more difficult," Fortier said.

Unifor's full submission is available at www.unifor.org/WorkplaceChanges.

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing more than 310,000 workers. It was formed Labour Day weekend 2013 when the Canadian Auto Workers and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union merged.

For further information: please contact Unifor National Representative Stuart Laidlaw at Stuart.Laidlaw@Unifor.org or (cell) 647-385-4054.