



March 13, 2024

SENT VIA EMAIL

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier, Province of Ontario
premier@ontario.ca

Premier Ford,

RE: Protecting temporary employment agency workers in Ontario

On behalf of Migrante Ontario, a provincial and national labour and migrant rights advocacy group, and in collaboration with Unifor and their more than 160,000 union members across Ontario, we are writing to raise our deep concern surrounding the ongoing lack of protections for temporary agency workers in the province and how this is negatively and disproportionately impacting migrant, racialized, and low-income workers across Ontario.

As you are aware, 71 workers at the Del Monte plant in Oshawa represented by Unifor Local 222 [were recently terminated while on strike](#) in their attempt to secure fair wages and improved working conditions. Representatives from Migrante Ontario visited workers on the picket line to offer support, as many were from migrant and racialized communities. However, because the workers were employed by Premier, a third-party temp staffing agency owned by SwipeJobs, there was little recourse for these workers when Del Monte decided to abruptly cancel the contract with the agency. Workers were not provided notice or offered any sort of termination or severance pay from the employer.

Unifor has been in conversation with Minister Piccini about the Del Monte situation and the problems it has exposed. Unifor appreciates the Minister's quick response to our concerns and we understand that your government intends to take further action around the exploitation of workers employed through temp agencies.

We believe it is truly unacceptable how some employers and temporary help agencies continue to get away with this type of worker treatment and how workers' right to strike and collective bargaining can be undermined. According to Ontario's Employment Standards Act (ESA), and current exemptions surrounding termination and severance

during strikes and lockouts, these actions are permitted – highlighting we believe a serious loophole in the law.

The Del Monte case reveals how Ontario employers continue to treat temporary agency workers as a disposable workforce, and highlights how those most impacted are often migrants, women and workers of colour, who earn low wages and work in poor and dangerous working conditions.

Further, nearly a third of the workers at the plant were employed for over five years, begging the question of how a profitable company such as Del Monte can justify its ongoing use ‘temporary’ employees for so long.

Legislation is required to ensure that companies hire workers directly after a certain period of time, with just cause protection, so that they cannot simply be replaced with new temp workers.

Your government has recently taken some steps in this area, such as implementing a licensing regime for temporary agencies to curb incidents of worker abuse and exploitation, but gaps remain. We implore your government to take the necessary next steps to eliminate these exemptions, close loopholes in the ESA and better protect temporary agency workers in Ontario. We look forward to continuing to work with Minister Piccini and your government on these issues and we appreciate any and all opportunities to share experiences and recommendations.

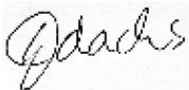
Sincerely,



Lana Payne, National President Unifor



Samia Hashi, Ontario Regional Director, Unifor



Bayani Edades, International Solidarity Officer, Migrant

CC: Hon. David Piccini, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
MPP Jennifer French, Oshawa