

May 17, 2017

Dear Premier Kathleen Wynne and Minister Kevin Flynn,

Re: Ontario workers need significant changes to outdated laws

On behalf of Unifor and the more than 160,000 Ontario workers we represent, we are writing to express our hopes and aspirations for the future of work in the province. Workers in Ontario have long suffered under woefully out of date employment laws.

Our union has commended your government for its leadership in taking an important first step to address the gross inequity that characterizes so much of today's labour market. Unifor, along with other labour organizations, advocacy, faith, anti-poverty, student groups and others have been deeply engaged in the Changing Workplace Review and believe that it must yield positive results for Ontario workers in the form of significant changes to the existing laws.

We are pleased to learn that the much-anticipated final report and recommendations of the Review will be released imminently. While we are keenly looking forward to the release of the report, it is most important that these recommendations are quickly followed by strong legislation that will modernize our employment laws in keeping with today's workplace realities.

What is required is nothing short of a major overhaul of our existing employment laws – both the Employment Standards and Labour Relations Acts. The demand is simple, make work fair for every worker in Ontario. Making work fairer must mean access to paid sick days; a \$15 minimum wage; three weeks of vacation; equal pay and benefits for equal work, regardless of one's classification (temporary, casual, part-time, student, seasonal, etc.); an end to all exclusions and exemptions; protections against contract flipping; the ability to join and keep a union; protections for the right to strike; paid leave for domestic violence survivors; access to broader-based bargaining; and an expansion to the definition of employee and employer and much more.

We are deeply disturbed by the recent correspondence and comments by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce which suggests that government can simply wash its hands of the responsibility of creating the conditions for an equal distribution of wealth. Experience has shown that such an important task cannot be left to the free market – as it has only ever been met with failure.

Further, we reject the cynical notion that income inequality and a dramatic rise in insecure work is inevitable and irresistible, and that society must simply resolve itself to a reality of grim precarity and inequality.

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To address the needs of the most vulnerable working people and establish a better labour market balance, we urge your government to act now and carry forward your commitment to workers in Ontario. We believe that a better labour market balance – one that protects individual workers, and achieves a more desirable and sustainable distribution of income between workers and businesses – can be achieved on the basis of innovative, modern labour market policies. Today we are calling on your government to demonstrate its commitment to the people of Ontario by introducing bold and progressive legislation that will help raise the floor for all Ontario workers and create the conditions for decent work. Let this be an important moment in Ontario’s history.

Sincerely,



Jerry Dias
National President



Naureen Rizvi
Ontario Regional Director

CC:

The Ontario Cabinet

Steve Orsini, Secretary of Cabinet

Patrick Brown, Leader of the Ontario PC Party

Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Ontario NDP

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