

What's at stake with Bill 148?

The Ontario government indicated it may cancel the \$15 minimum wage and repeal the *Fairer Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017*. Here's why Members of Provincial Parliament must protect Bill 148:

A \$15 minimum wage: Help is on the way

Over 1.7 million Ontario workers are counting on the \$15 minimum wage scheduled for January 1, 2019 – just weeks away. Over 66% of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage, including 62% of small business owners and 42% of Conservative voters.

Those who benefit from Bill 148 are people who work in food services, retail, childcare, health care, manufacturing, warehousing, transportation, business services and more. Ontario workers have been planning and budgeting for a much needed wage increase in order to put food on the table and pay the rent.

Employers already planned for the increase

According to the Financial Post, many employers have already planned for and implemented the wage increase, including companies like Walmart. JJ Bean Roasters has also applied the \$14 minimum wage across Canada, and even increased the wage for all employees making less than \$20 hourly.

Ontario's economy is thriving

Do not be fooled by the misinformation coming from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, especially concerning the August jobs numbers. The evidence from Statistics Canada actually shows that Ontario's unemployment rate remains at near record lows, and in addition:

- From August 2017 to August 2018, Ontario increased the number of jobs by 79,000.
- Total hours worked in Ontario grew between August 2017 and August 2018 – but they grew FASTEST between January and August, AFTER the \$14 minimum wage took effect.
- When we look at the food and accommodation sector that has the highest concentration of minimum wage earners, the number of hours worked **increased by a whopping 13 percent since** the minimum wage went to \$14.

With 54 percent of our GDP dependent on household spending, it makes economic sense to raise the floor of wages and working conditions in Ontario. A higher minimum wage puts more money in consumers' pockets – money that goes directly into local economies.

Consultations have already taken place

Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, is actually quite modest in the steps taken to address our outdated workplace laws. These extremely modest improvements are the result of an extensive 2-year Changing

Workplaces Review that held multiple consultations across the province and commissioned substantial numbers of academic papers. The legislation itself went through two rounds of committee hearings (not just one, which is a more typical process) that toured the province, with plenty of input from the business community.

Not luxuries, basic necessities

This legislation brought modest reforms to better protect workers made vulnerable as a result of outdated labour laws, and included the following crucial changes:

- The right of workers not to lose their job if they have to miss work to look after a sick child or aging parent.
- 2 paid sick days – the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement this important health measure.
- Fairer scheduling rules that would allow workers to not be fired if they refuse a shift scheduled with fewer than 4 days notice. This is a modest step that allows workers to plan time with their families, for child care, for community life, religious observances, and even exam and study schedules.
- The right to be paid the same wage rate as your coworker who does the same job, even if hired through a temporary agency.
- More effective enforcement of our workplace laws to ensure employers follow the law, and provide a level playing field between employers.
- A \$15 adult minimum wage.

These, and other provisions in the law, are not luxuries. They are basic, minimal protections that all workers deserve.

Long over due

The changes provided in Bill 148, far from being “too much, too soon” are long overdue – and in fact don't go far enough to ensure all workers have decent work and wages.

But they are crucial first steps that will help provide some fairness and decency in the workplace and put Ontario's economy on a more sustainable path that allows workers, businesses, and our communities, to flourish.

For the people

We urge you and your party to stand with the millions of Ontario workers counting on these modest reforms.

For more information visit: 15andFairness.org