

# MAKE IT FAIR, MAKE IT PROSPEROUS

A FRAMEWORK FOR DECENT JOBS AND A MORE EQUITABLE ONTARIO



**ONTARIO  
FEDERATION OF  
LABOUR**

**THE ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR'S 2017 Pre-Budget Submission**  
to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Government of Ontario





January 18, 2017

The Honourable Charles Sousa  
Minister of Finance  
c/o Budget Secretariat  
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor  
95 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1

Dear Minister Sousa,

The 2017 budget is an important opportunity for the government to speak to Ontarians, to listen to their concerns, and to create an Ontario that reflects their realities and their hopes.

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) has great hopes for the future of employment in this province. The 2017 budget should build workers up. It should ensure that all workers will be protected by a higher standard of employment and labour laws. It should ensure that women and men as well as racialized and non-racialized workers will be treated equitably in the labour market. It should ensure that all young people will be able to access a universal, tuition-free post-secondary education system. It should ensure that all Ontarians will enjoy a decent standard of living.

As a champion of unionized and non-unionized workers in this province, the OFL calls on the government to create an economy that is decent, fair, and equitable – where no one is left behind. This bold vision is needed to maintain economic momentum and to secure a future of shared prosperity.

It's time to build Ontarians up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CB", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Chris Buckley**  
*President*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Coates", with a stylized "P" and "C".

**Patty Coates**  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AG", with a stylized "A" and "G".

**Ahmad Gaied**  
*Executive Vice-President*

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The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) – which represents 54 affiliates and one million workers across the province – is pleased to make a submission to the Government of Ontario on the development of the 2017 budget.

In an effort to build Ontario up, this document provides several recommendations that are expected to help shape the government's upcoming fiscal and legislative agendas.

The budget presents an important opportunity for the government to articulate its vision for the province over the next few years. It is our hope that this budget reflects values of decency, equity, and fairness for all workers in Ontario.

# BUILDING ONTARIANS UP

## Workers

The government has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish a higher standard for working conditions across the province, the country, and the world at large. Now is the time to demonstrate that a prosperous economy can be built on principles of decent work – one of the guiding values of the 2016 Changing Workplaces Review: Special Advisors' Interim Report.

The International Labour Organization describes decent work as follows:

*Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all [persons].<sup>i</sup>*

Today, Ontario falls short of this goal. This is demonstrated by the documented shift away from “standard” towards “non-standard” work across the province.<sup>ii</sup> The standard employment relationship, characterized by full-time, secure work as well as good wages and benefits, is no longer the predominant work structure in Ontario. In its place, part-time, temporary, and casual (i.e., precarious) forms of employment have become increasingly common.<sup>iii</sup> Precarious employment, characterized by low income and few – if any – workplace benefits, little or no job security, uncertainty over work scheduling, and little or no protection through unions,<sup>iv</sup> can harm the economy. Namely, the lack of income security associated with precarious work reduces consumer confidence, leading people to spend less. In turn, this reduces business profits and investments, which diminishes government revenue.

These substantial changes demand substantial action.

The labour movement has been encouraged by the government's leadership role in recognizing its responsibility to create a fairer, more equitable Ontario through the undertaking of the Changing Workplaces Review. The OFL expects that responsive and fair legislation will result from this process to better reflect the current realities of work in Ontario.

Legislative changes, for example, must recognize that although the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* enshrines the fundamental freedom of all Canadians to associate for the meaningful pursuit of collective workplace goals – which includes the right to organize, the right to join a union, the right to engage in meaningful collective bargaining, and the right to strike – the present legislation in Ontario makes it increasingly difficult to organize, administer, and bargain a collective agreement. Consequently, for areas with low union density and/or little bargaining strength, the current labour laws and the current bargaining model must evolve to better serve unionized workers and to provide non-unionized workers with meaningful access to collective bargaining – a vehicle for improving their lives at work.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

**To make it easier to join and keep a union, the OFL is advocating for several changes to the *Labour Relations Act*, including:**

- **Introduce broader-based bargaining models to increase access to unionization.**
- **Allow workers to meaningfully exercise the freedom of association (e.g., reintroduce card-check certification; allow for neutral, online, or telephone voting; legislate early disclosure of workplace information; streamline the remedial certification process; reinstate workers before the first agreement).**
- **Provide access to first contract arbitration.**
- **Extend successor rights to protect workers in the case of contract flipping.**
- **Secure the right to strike (e.g., prohibit the use of replacement workers, safeguard the rights of workers who have been involved in a labour dispute)**
- **Remove all exemptions and exceptions to the *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Relations Act*.**

It is important to note that the OFL champions the rights of all workers – both unionized and non-unionized – in this province. Given that the *Employment Standards Act* is meant to establish the minimum conditions for work in Ontario, this legislation must protect the rights and livelihood of all workers. Currently, standards of work in this province fail to reflect the transformative change occurring in the labour market, leaving many in financially and psychologically precarious situations. It is therefore time to prioritize workers, recognize that they are the backbone of the Ontario economy, and support their right to unionize.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

**To raise the bar for all workers, the OFL is advocating for several changes to the *Employment Standards Act*, including:**

- **Expand the definitions of employer and employee, including joint and several liability as well as related and joint employers.**
- **Mandate equal pay, benefits, and working conditions for equal work for all workers.**
- **Enact stronger enforcement for the *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Relations Act*.**
- **Extend just cause protection to all workers.**

- **Protect freedom of association by protecting concerted activity.**
- **Offer paid sick days and adequate vacation.**
- **Require advanced scheduling notice.**
- **Provide paid leave for domestic and sexual violence survivors.**

For millions of Ontario workers – who find themselves in a constant state of uncertainty with limited income, social benefits, and statutory entitlements – maintaining the status quo is no longer an option. Meaningful legislative changes are needed now. As discussed, the 2017 budget presents an important opportunity to demonstrate to Ontarians the values and principles guiding the government’s policy decisions – particularly regarding workers’ rights.

*For more information, please refer to the OFL’s October 2016 [submission](#) on the Changing Workplaces Review.*

## Women

One of the most dramatic social changes in the last century has been the significant rise in the proportion of working women. Governments and employers, however, have failed to adequately respond to this change, leaving women at a significant disadvantage in the labour market.

Women in Ontario, for example, earn 68.5 cents for every dollar that men earn. On average, a woman must work nearly four months longer to earn the same amount that a man will in a year. This gap is significantly more pronounced for Indigenous, racialized, and immigrant women as well as women with disabilities.<sup>v</sup>

The contributing factors to the gender wage differential demonstrate some of the unique challenges women encounter in the workforce. Female-dominated fields are often perceived as less skilled or unskilled in the marketplace because some of the duties performed may mirror those that women have customarily been expected to do in the home for free.

As a result, traditionally female-dominated fields typically pay less.<sup>vi</sup> Furthermore, a sizeable proportion of women are employed in lower-wage occupations and lower-paid industries. In fact, women are overrepresented in the 20 lowest-paid occupations,<sup>vii</sup> representing over 60 per cent of the 1.7 million<sup>viii</sup> Ontarians who earn at or near the minimum wage. Moreover, females denote two-thirds of those in part-time employment,<sup>ix</sup> where there are fewer opportunities for career advancement and lower pay relative to full-time employment. This is due to a number of external factors, including public policy decisions (e.g., family leave policies, child care policies) and reinforced gendered norms (e.g., expectation to perform the majority of domestic responsibilities). The unequal distribution of caregiving results in women having less time for paid work (see the Section on Child Care for more information). It is also important to emphasize that part of the wage differential is attributed to gender-related stereotyping, bias, and discrimination in areas of life and work.<sup>x</sup>

**Women are overrepresented in the 20 lowest-paid occupations, representing over 60 per cent of the 1.7 million Ontarians who earn at or near the minimum wage.**



Ultimately, the gender wage gap is a human rights issue and must be addressed.

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

- **Perform gender-responsive budgeting.**

### RECOMMENDATION 4:

- **Fund, enforce, and expand pay and employment equity law and policy.**

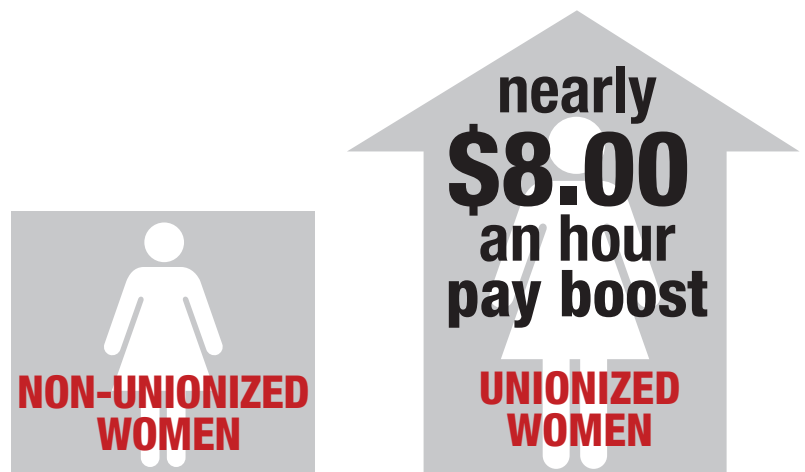
The 2016 Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee's Final Report and Recommendations suggested that the government perform gender-responsive budgeting.<sup>ix</sup> This allows the Province to not only account for gender effects of public spending and revenues but also to amend gender inequalities through the allocation of public investments and resources. Specifically, austerity budgets aimed at deficit reduction often disproportionately affect low-income and working families – especially women because they typically earn less than men and use more government services.<sup>x</sup> Furthermore, it is essential that Ontario has a well-funded pay and employment equity legislative program to reverse the decades of inaction by previous iterations of government. Namely, Ontario's Pay Equity Commission must be properly-resourced to ensure enforcement and compliance of Ontario's pay equity laws.

### RECOMMENDATION 5:

- **Make it easier for women to join unions by supporting meaningful legislative changes.**

It is also important to note that collective bargaining and pay equity measures have, for example, proven to significantly reduce the gap between what women and men are paid for their time at work. In fact, unionized women receive an average pay boost of nearly \$8.00 an hour and benefit from better job security and workplace benefits.<sup>xiii</sup> Making it easier and more accessible for women to join or form a union as well as collectively bargain for wages, benefits, and job security will help contribute to the elimination of precarious employment, the gender pay differential, and inequitable employment practices.

It's 2017. Women should no longer have to fight to be paid fairly for their work.



**Unionized women receive an average pay boost of nearly \$8.00 an hour and benefit from better job security and workplace benefits.**

*For more information, please refer to the OFL's January 2016 [submission](#) on the Gender Wage Gap Strategy.*



## Racialized People

Racialized<sup>1</sup> workers encounter labour market discrimination – be it through assumptions made about the worth of racialized employees or instances where racialized workers are bypassed for employment, promotions, or are paid less regardless of their individual skills and experiences.<sup>xiv</sup> This is reflected across several different indicators, including the ability to secure and maintain employment (e.g., unemployment rate) as well as career trajectories (e.g., lifetime earnings). In fact, racialized Canadians earn 81 cents for every dollar paid to non-racialized Canadians.<sup>xv</sup> Predictably, racialized workers are overrepresented in precarious jobs – employment that is insecure, temporary, low paying, and has little chance for advancement.<sup>xvi</sup>

**Racialized Canadians earn 81 cents for every dollar paid to non-racialized Canadians.**

Along with community groups – such as the Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change and the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians – as well as with the Ontario New Democratic Party, the OFL has long advocated for the establishment of an Anti-Racism Directorate. In 2016, the Province created this Directorate with a mandate to decrease systemic racism, increase public awareness and understanding of systemic racism, and promote fair practices and policies that lead to racial equity.<sup>xvii</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION 6:

- **Establish an appropriate annual budget to ensure that the Anti-Racism Directorate has the required resources. All ministries should also have funding allocated to anti-racism initiatives.**

To demonstrate the depth of its commitment to eliminating racism in Ontario, the government must establish an appropriate annual budget to ensure that the Directorate has the required resources. It is important to note that other directorates and secretariats (e.g., women, accessibility, seniors) in the province have significantly higher funding than the \$5 million currently proposed for the Anti-Racism Directorate. Furthermore, to effectively achieve the overall objective of the Directorate (i.e., eradicating racism in the province), all ministries must partake in realizing this goal. Funding for anti-racism initiatives is therefore needed.

The barriers that prevent the full and equal participation of all racialized workers must also be dismantled. Every worker, for example, should be able to exercise their constitutional right to organize and to collectively bargain. Given that racialized workers have a 30 per cent lower unionization rate than non-racialized workers<sup>xviii</sup>, there needs to be a broader collective bargaining mechanism that allows these individuals to provide greater input in and influence over the issues that affect them at work.

### RECOMMENDATION 7:

- **Focus the Anti-Racism Strategy on creating opportunities for racialized workers to thrive by increasing access to unionization, raising employment standards, investing in social programs, and increasing the minimum wage.**

<sup>1</sup> The term racialized is used to acknowledge “race” as a social construct and a way of describing a group of people. In the present context, racialized groups include those who may experience differential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, economics, and religion (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2008).

For millions of workers across the province, belonging to a union has proven to be an effective way to have meaningful representation at work. Unionization provides resources and supports to help workers strengthen and enforce their rights under the law. It also leads to improved wages, better working conditions, and the availability of benefits beyond minimum standards.<sup>xix</sup> Furthermore, the Ontario government should also use the opportunity of the Changing Workplaces Review to apply an equity lens on employment and labour conditions in Ontario. Changes must be made to both the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act* that will help create a framework for decent work for all Ontarians.

**For more information, please refer to the OFL's October 2016 [submission](#) on the Anti-Racism Directorate.**

## Survivors of Violence

For those that have experienced domestic and sexual violence, stable employment is imperative. The financial security associated with employment provides the economic independence needed to leave a destructive relationship. It is important to recognize that escaping domestic and sexual violence is time consuming and financially straining. Survivors, for example, must navigate the complexities of the legal system, find transitional housing, and access medical services and counseling.

Domestic violence affects workers both on and off the job. According to a 2014 Canadian Labour Congress and Western University study, of the respondents that had experienced domestic violence, more than 80 per cent said that it hurt their job performance; nearly 40 per cent reported that the violence made them late or miss work; and nearly ten per cent lost their jobs as a result of their situation.<sup>xx</sup> Moreover, domestic violence impacts others in the workplace. Over a third of coworkers reported their work performance suffered because of the stress they were feeling for their colleagues. Overall, it has been conservatively estimated that decreased productivity due to domestic and sexual violence has contributed to nearly \$80 million in annual costs for Canadian employers.<sup>xxi</sup>

**Overall, it has been conservatively estimated that decreased productivity due to domestic and sexual violence has contributed to nearly \$80 million in annual costs for Canadian employers.**

### RECOMMENDATION 8:

- **Legislate ten days of job-protected, paid domestic and sexual violence leave and the provision of survivors to access flexible work arrangements.**

### RECOMMENDATION 9:

- **Fund workplace training and education on the impacts and signs of domestic and sexual violence for all managers and workers.**

In the same way that workers need protections to ensure health and safety, they also need protections from domestic and sexual violence. It is important that workplaces across Ontario provide ten days of paid leave for survivors of domestic

and sexual violence; recognize the right of survivors to access flexible work arrangements; and offer workplace training on the effects of domestic violence in the workplace and on domestic violence prevention. Job-protected, paid domestic and sexual violence leave will provide employees with the time needed from work to address matters associated with this violence and ensure their own safety. Training will help sensitize employers to the warning signs, impacts, and risks of such violence to ensure that they can develop appropriate measures of response. To ensure that these provisions are accessible for survivors across the province, the government will need to provide sufficient funding and resources. The government is also strongly encouraged to continue its commitment on this file and pass legislation that will allow survivors to access ten days of job-protected, paid domestic and sexual violence leave.

Survivors should no longer be forced to choose between their safety and their job.

Along with community partners, the OFL strongly supports *Bill 26, Domestic and Sexual Violence Workplace Leave, Accommodation and Training Act, 2016*. This Bill speaks to the pressing need to support survivors of sexual and domestic violence with paid time off. As demonstrated by the actions of many jurisdictions, including Manitoba and Australia, there is growing recognition that the investment made by employers to support survivors produces strong social returns.<sup>xxii</sup> The government has an opportunity to further advance this conversation and create a legal framework that protects survivors in the workplace.

## Injured Workers

Injured workers continue to be left behind in Ontario.

Certain industries (e.g., banks, insurance companies, hairdressers/barbers, funeral directors, shoe shiners, private education companies) continue to be excluded from Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage. Employees in these fields, who sustain workplace-related injuries, are therefore not compensated by the WSIB on a “no fault” basis (i.e., where workers are compensated regardless of who is at fault: the employer, the employee, or another party). It is important to note that a disproportionate number of these workers are women.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION 10:

- **Broaden WSIB coverage to include all occupational sectors and therefore all workers in Ontario.**

Given that WSIB-related law requires employers to reinstate and accommodate workers injured on the job, those working in excluded sectors do not enjoy this protection. Excluded employers also do not have to provide paid sick leaves or disability insurance. Consequently, excluded workers are often left unemployed, seeking benefits from Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan Disability, or the Ontario Disability Support Program. Moreover, the treatment required for these workplace injuries are covered by the health care system rather than the employer, which is currently the case with covered employers.

Overall, for excluded sectors, all of the costs associated with a workplace injury are borne by the public. Compulsory WSIB coverage must be extended to all employers in the province to ensure that all workers are protected.

**Approximately 55 per cent of all workers with a permanent disability are chronically unemployed.**

Government funding must also be restored to the Injured Worker Group Funding Program (IWGFP) – a program that ran from 1993 to 2002 – to help alleviate some of the barriers that these workers face. Approximately 55 per cent of all workers with a permanent disability are chronically unemployed.<sup>xxiv</sup> The vast majority of these individuals need support to adjust to life with a disability and to negotiate the bureaucracy at the WSIB. It is also acknowledged by all parties that injured workers need to participate in developing appropriate and workable solutions to system-wide issues.

## RECOMMENDATION 11:

- **The OFL recommends that support for IWGFP be re-established and specifically designated to fund the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG).**

Restored funding for this program will assist the ONIWG by helping to:

- Establish more self-help groups in areas presently not serviced.
- Develop new services that will see injured workers return to safe and meaningful work.
- Increase the number of educational meetings and workshops.
- Promote the community forum model to build partnerships in local communities.
- Provide more training to build capacity-enhancing volunteer development and accountability.
- Strengthen the links with the WSIB to improve their services and programs.
- By broadening WSIB coverage to include all occupational sectors and by restoring funding to the IWGFP, the government can ensure that all workers can effectively participate in the Ontario economy.

## Youth

Ontario's youth are encountering unprecedented economic, demographic, and social conditions. Initiatives, such as the government's *Changing Workplaces Review*, the *Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel*, and the Ontario New Democratic Party's *Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act*, indicate that there is widespread acknowledgment that the minimum standards for decent work in Ontario need to change and that the conditions for vulnerable workers, including youth, to access those standards must be created.

Successfully transitioning from school to work continues to be difficult for many students. For those who are unable to find a job after graduation, this initial negative experience can lead to permanent scarring effects, such as lower lifetime earnings, reduced employability, and labour market detachment.<sup>xxvi</sup> For those that do secure a job, most find themselves underemployed – in something akin to a 'survival job'. These jobs are often temporary, meaning that they tend to pay lower wages, offer fewer workplace benefits, are less likely to offer on-the-job training, and are more precarious in nature.<sup>xxviii</sup> Compared to 40 years ago, the proportion of young Canadians with full-time or permanent jobs has substantially decreased<sup>2, xxvii</sup>

This labour market trend for youth has been exacerbated by the steady deterioration in job quality,<sup>xxv</sup> the mismatch between labour supply and demand,<sup>xxviii</sup> as well as the underinvestment in workplace training<sup>xxx</sup>.

2 The decline in youth full-time employment rates was driven mainly by increases in the incidence of part-time employment rather than by decreases in youth labour force participation or increases in youth unemployment.



## RECOMMENDATION 12:

- **Provide supports for businesses and post-secondary institutions to ensure that all students can access meaningful and paid work-integrated learning opportunities.**

To allow students to successfully enter the workforce, learning should extend beyond the classroom. There is tremendous value in ensuring that post-secondary students participate in at least one experiential learning opportunity before they graduate. For students, this allows them to determine their fit with a potential career while gaining practical work experience to enhance their employability. For employers, it is an opportunity to create a more skilled workforce and screen potential new hires. Ultimately, all students should be able to leverage their education and participate in meaningful and paid work-integrated learning. A financial commitment is therefore required from the government to help support post-secondary institutions and businesses create this transition.

It is important to note that in the absence of traditional workplace training, the onus to teach job skills has increasingly fallen to post-secondary institutions. Because per student public funding in Ontario continues to decline, despite being at the lowest level in Canada,<sup>xxxi</sup> universities are increasingly relying on a growing number of contract faculty – who have no job security and receive low pay – to do a rising proportion of teaching and training. Working conditions experienced by contract faculty reflect the same learning conditions experienced by students, jeopardizing the quality of university education in Ontario. The Changing Workplaces Review provides an important opportunity to improve and create fair working conditions for all contract workers.

***For more information, please refer to the OFL's October 2016 [deputation on the Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act](#).***

## Low-Income People

Jobs should be a pathway out of poverty. Unfortunately, this is not the case for Ontario's working poor – the 1.7 million workers across the province who find themselves in low-wage<sup>3</sup> jobs.<sup>xxxi</sup> Many of these jobs are temporary, provide few – if

### People living in poverty cannot afford to wait.

any – workplace benefits, have little or no job security, allow for constantly changing work scheduling, and provide little or no protection through unions. Some low-wage and precarious employers justify paying their employees an inadequate wage by placing the onus on the social welfare system to make up the difference required for workers' and their families' to live in dignity. As a result, many Ontarians find themselves living in poverty – despite holding one or multiple jobs.

In response, the Province announced its intention to design and implement a Basic Income pilot in the 2016 budget. In Fall 2016, a discussion paper was released, promoting a three-year pilot program that will study individual- and community-level effects using different benefit levels and claw-back rates. People living in poverty, however, cannot afford to wait. Numerous studies have already demonstrated that a basic income – if implemented properly and combined with other structural changes – has the potential to make a meaningful difference.<sup>xxxi</sup>



**Compared to 40 years ago, the proportion of young Canadians with full-time or permanent jobs has substantially decreased.**

The OFL supports the immediate provision of a basic income – provided that everyone living in poverty is better off as a result of receiving this income. To effectively contribute to raising people’s quality of life, a basic income must be responsive to changes in income and the cost of living, provide adequate income above the poverty line, and be paid through progressive revenue sources. It is, however, important to recognize that there is no singular measure that will eliminate poverty in Ontario. Instead, a basic income should be viewed as one course of action among many that are needed to lift hundreds of thousands of Ontarians out of poverty. There are multiple dimensions of poverty that extend beyond inadequate income – such as inadequate access to education, health care, employment opportunities, and public programs and services; lack of political influence; and social exclusion – that need to be addressed.

### RECOMMENDATION 13:

**In addition to immediately providing a universal basic income, the OFL is eager to see the government act on the following recommendations in an effort to eliminate poverty in Ontario:**

- **Increase social assistance rates to sit above the poverty line.**
- **Make social assistance more accessible.**
- **Remove barriers to paid employment.**
- **Raise minimum standards and increase access to unionization through the Changing Workplaces Review.**
- **Expand universal social programs and public services (e.g., child care, housing, pharma care, post-secondary education, social and community services, public pensions).**
- **Introduce a \$15 per hour minimum wage for all workers.**
- **Implement a full employment strategy.**
- **Close the gender wage gap.** <sup>xxxiv</sup>



Ontario needs to create conditions for decent work and improve the quality of jobs and wages. This includes ensuring that employees and their families live and work in dignity instead of living in poverty. Overall, the legislative framework governing Ontario’s employment and labour laws must allow for better working conditions, more permanent full-time work with good wages and benefits, and greater access to joining and keeping a union. Furthermore, a basic income should not be viewed as a substitute for a decent and fair wage. To ensure that a basic income does not become an even larger subsidy to employers, which will further drive down wages and workers’ bargaining power, the minimum wage in Ontario must be raised to \$15 per hour for all workers – with no exceptions. Ontarians need a minimum wage that brings workers above the low-income measure because no one should work full-time and still live in poverty.

**Ontarians need a minimum wage that brings workers above the low-income measure because no one should work full-time and still live in poverty.**

The government must also continue to pursue full employment (i.e., a situation when there is no involuntary unemployment) policies. It has been demonstrated that low unemployment rates generally lead to higher wages, particularly for low-paid employees. Namely, higher levels of employment directly increase workers' bargaining power on workplaces issues, such as wages and benefits.<sup>xxxv</sup> Decent jobs are known to stimulate growth through increased consumer confidence and spending in the economy. Furthermore, high employment rates help boost workers' political power in the economy and society at large.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Overall, providing decent jobs to those that are unemployed will reduce inequality, minimize poverty, and provide an opportunity for everyone to meaningfully participate in and contribute to society.

***For more information, please refer to the OFL's January 2017 submission on the Basic Income Pilot (forthcoming).***

# BUILDING ONTARIO UP

## Labour Market

Over the last few decades, there has been a dramatic restructuring of Ontario's labour market due to a number of factors, including the fissuring of the workplace,<sup>xxxvii</sup> increasing diversity within the workforce,<sup>xxxviii</sup> and declining union representation<sup>xxxix</sup>. The OFL firmly believes that it is the collective responsibility of the partners and actors in the labour market – including government, educators, businesses, and labour – to help address the new challenges that have emerged.

To produce tangible outcomes, these groups must come together on a regular basis to discuss, debate, research, and advise on related public policies and initiatives.

### RECOMMENDATION 14:

**The Province should establish a permanent Labour Market Partners Forum to speak to a broad range of labour market development issues and opportunities.**

Specifically, this Forum should consist of three bodies:

#### The Premier's Advisory Council

The Premier's Advisory Council should meet biannually to establish goals, strategic plans, and priorities. These plans should be reviewed annually to evaluate their effectiveness. The Council should include political leadership from government and labour as well as thought leaders from academia and business.

#### Labour Market Partners Committee

The Labour Market Partners Committee should meet monthly to develop and inform goals and strategic plans, initiate research, collect labour market data, develop forecasting models, identify barriers, develop recommendations as well as build partnerships and collaborative efforts. The Committee can initiate working groups to deliver on the priorities identified by the Premier's Advisory Council. Further, the Committee should include representatives at the staff level of government, business, and labour.

#### Partners Secretariat

A small provincial secretariat can support the work of the Forum.

Overall, the Labour Market Partners Forum is expected to foster partnerships and collaboration across civil society, government, educators, labour, and employers; expand knowledge of labour market trends; establish best practices in labour adjustment supports; and develop participation and retention strategies for youth, women, racialized workers, Indigenous peoples, older workers, and people with disabilities. To effectively carry out this mandate, sufficient resources must be allocated by the government to establish and sustain these bodies.

***For more information, please refer to the OFL's June 2016 submission on the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Strategy.***



## Education

Undergraduate and graduate students in Ontario pay the highest university tuition fees in the country.<sup>xi</sup> Consequently, they tend to graduate with significant debt loads. For young people, this level of debt can be crippling – hindering their ability to find meaningful work, start businesses, purchase big-ticket items such as homes and cars, as well as postponing important milestones such as beginning a family. More importantly, post-secondary education must be viewed as a right of all citizens. The benefit of education extends beyond the individual to reach all corners of society, leading to better health, community development, civic engagement, and economic outcomes.<sup>xii</sup>

In the 2016 budget, the government took steps towards increasing access to post-secondary education for 320,000 students in Ontario. A greater financial commitment, however, is required for all students.



**Undergraduate and graduate students in Ontario pay the highest university tuition fees in the country.**

### RECOMMENDATION 15:

**The OFL – in partnership with the Canadian Federation of Students – strongly urges the government to develop a universal, fully-funded system of post-secondary education for all Ontario students.**

Given that the high cost of tuition is the most substantial barrier to access education, and it disproportionately affects those who cannot afford this cost upfront,<sup>xiii</sup> tuition fees must be eliminated in Ontario.

## Health Care

With the decline in full-time and permanent work,<sup>xliii</sup> the provision of workplace benefits including health and drug coverage has become increasingly less common. In 2011, 27 per cent of part-time workers in Canada had employer-provided medical benefits relative to 73 per cent of full-time workers.<sup>xliv</sup> According to the Wellesley Institute, one in three workers in Ontario do not receive employer-provided medical or dental benefits, and workers with low earnings are far less likely to receive benefits than those with higher earnings.<sup>xlv</sup> In particular, those that are precariously employed receive few – if any – workplace benefits. More than 80 per cent of precarious jobs in Ontario do not receive any benefits including vision, dental, and prescription drug coverage.<sup>xlvi</sup> Inadequate access to health, dental, and prescription drug benefits has therefore forced workers and their families to delay – or bypass – essential health and dental care in the short term with costs to the health care system compounding over the long term. Furthermore, due to the uncertainty associated with precarious employment (e.g., unpredictable work schedules and income), these workers tend to have poorer mental health outcomes than those working secure jobs. Precarious employment therefore contributes to negative short- and long-term health outcomes and exacerbates existing health inequalities.

In addition to the disparities in the labour market, consistent underfunding has placed a significant strain on the health care system.

**One in three workers in Ontario do not receive employer-provided medical or dental benefits, and workers with low earnings are far less likely to receive benefits than those with higher earnings.**



#### RECOMMENDATION 16:

- **Commit to increased funding for hospitals to meet patient demands.**

The 2016 Ontario Auditor General report revealed several of the resulting consequences, including the inability to meet Ontarians' health care demands. In the past year, for example, nearly 60 per cent of large community hospitals had inadequate financial resources for certain types of surgeries and were forced to defer them to the next fiscal year.<sup>xlvii</sup> In fact, 45 per cent of large hospitals have one or more operating rooms closed due to funding constraints.<sup>xlviii</sup> Overall, wait time targets have not been met for numerous surgeries (e.g., neurological, vascular, and cancer patients) as well as for the emergency room.<sup>xlix</sup> To ensure that the health care system, including its workers, can meet future demands, it is imperative that the government address imminent systemic issues such as precarious employment and chronic underfunding of Ontario's health care system.

## Environment

The effects of climate change must be addressed, but it should be done in a manner that allows for a just transition of the workforce. This means that the effort required to bring about change – a change that will benefit everyone – will not be disproportionately placed on the few and those that are most vulnerable will be protected. Moreover, the process for change will increase social justice for workers, women, racialized people, low-income people, and other marginalized groups.<sup>l</sup> Ontario can tackle climate change while shifting growth towards a sustainable development, where a green economy fosters decent jobs and decent livelihoods for all.

#### RECOMMENDATION 17:

- **Redistribute monies raised from the cap and trade program towards ensuring a just transition of the workforce.**

Under the new cap and trade program, it is expected that the government will sell allowances to emit greenhouse gases and then distribute the funds raised towards other initiatives that will further decrease the collective's green footprint. It

is important that these initiatives support workers in carbon-intensive industries when the nature of their jobs changes. This includes workers having an authentic voice in decision-making and in retraining, income bridging, and the government making community investments to create good green jobs. Given that these initiatives will require substantial public funding and resources, it is expected that the government will redirect all revenues earned through the cap and trade program towards green initiatives, such as ensuring a just transition in the workplace.

## Infrastructure

Increasingly, ‘transformative change’ and ‘modernization’ in public policy have become synonymous with privatization. Private ownership leads to a reduced role for government and diminishes its ability to uphold the public good (e.g., making essential services affordable, accessible, available to everyone).<sup>ii</sup> Government has the responsibility to prioritize the interests of the collective and the vulnerable. Once that responsibility has been relinquished, however, it becomes increasingly difficult to ensure that those values are reflected in decision-making. In fact, as a result of government’s

**From 2005 to 2014, public-private partnerships cost Ontarians nearly \$8 billion more on infrastructure projects than if they were publicly delivered.**

weakening redistributive capacities, its ability to respond to social challenges has become less effective and inequality has become further entrenched.<sup>iii</sup>

It is important to recognize that private ownership does not inevitably translate into improved efficiency. From 2005 to 2014, public-private partnerships (P3s) cost Ontarians nearly \$8 billion more on infrastructure projects than if they were publicly delivered.<sup>iii</sup> It is incorrectly assumed that there is a

smaller risk of cost overruns and other issues with P3s compared with the public sector. Rather, companies pay substantially more than the government for financing and receive a premium in exchange for carrying out the project.<sup>iv</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION 18:

- **Stop the privatization of public assets and services, including Hydro One, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG), the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) as well as Ontario’s health care and education systems.**

On several occasions, Independent Officers of the Legislative Assembly have demonstrated that the privatization of public assets normalizes risk and privatizes rewards.

In 2015, for example, Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer (FAO) established that “in years following the sale of 60 per cent of Hydro One, the Province’s budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale.”<sup>iv</sup> Over time, the forgone revenues from Hydro One will begin to exceed the initial fiscal benefits. The company produces a substantial profit for the Province – \$750 million every year – much of which will be lost in the event of the sale. In fact, the FAO estimates that the sale will lead to upwards of \$500 million per

**Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer established that “in years following the sale of 60 per cent of Hydro One, the Province’s budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale.”**

year in lost income for the province – an amount that is expected to increase over time.<sup>liv</sup> This is upwards of half a billion dollars that will not be invested in schools, hospitals, roads, and other infrastructure projects each year. More importantly, under full public ownership, Hydro One is mandated to act in the best interest of the public, such as undertaking important environmental conservation and climate change initiatives. Conversely, a privatized Hydro One has a fiduciary obligation to seek the highest profits for its new shareholders, thereby prioritizing the interests of a select few over that of the collective.

In September 2016, the plan to privatize the OLG's lottery operation was cancelled, because it was determined that a private company could not provide greater value.<sup>lvii</sup> The government, however, remains steadfast in partnering with the private sector on OLG's innovation- and technology-related initiatives. It is important to recall that privatizing the OLG was proven to be ineffective before. In 2014, Ontario's Auditor General revealed that the 2012 plan to 'modernize' the OLG was expected to see upwards of 3500 lottery and gambling sector jobs disappear and that the Province would reap a fraction of the profits initially promised.<sup>lviii</sup>

In 2015, the government began taking steps towards selling wine and beer in Ontario grocery stores. It is important to understand the impact of this policy decision – a decision that is viewed as the privatization of the LCBO. In June 2016, for example, the LCBO announced that its sales were up 6.8 per cent, allowing it to provide the Province with a \$1.94-billion dividend – \$130 million greater than the previous year.<sup>lix</sup> With a significant amount of alcohol now being sold outside of the LCBO, upcoming sales – and thus, the government's profits – are expected to be negatively impacted. This means that there will be less money for the government to pay for public services; reduced social responsibility in terms of the sale of alcohol; and higher health and social costs with the increased availability of alcohol. In fact, Cancer Care Ontario recently warned that making it easier to purchase alcohol in Ontario will lead to increased consumption, which may lead to a rise in cancer rates. The provincial agency states that there are as many as 3000 new cases of cancer linked to alcohol use every year.<sup>lx</sup>

Instead of working towards achieving universal coverage for a greater breadth of health care goods and services, mergers, service consolidations, and closures of local hospitals have become increasingly prevalent in Ontario. For example, three hospitals closed in the north and east of Toronto recently and were replaced with one hospital that is operated through a P3. In that consolidation, a hospital situated in one of the poorest Toronto neighbourhoods – Jane and Finch – shut down, forcing residents to go further to access services.<sup>lxi</sup>

The OFL continues to strongly advocate against the privatization of public assets and services, including Hydro One, the OLG, the LCBO as well as Ontario's health care and education systems. To build shared prosperity and uphold the public good, public assets and services must remain under the public purview.

## Child Care

For women, the lack of access to child care is an identified barrier to entering the workforce. In fact, child care was the number one recommendation from the Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee.<sup>lxii</sup> It is well established that caregiving affects women's employment more so than for men. In fact, women are more likely to miss days at work, retire earlier, quit or lose their job, or turn down job offers due to unpaid care activities.<sup>lxiii</sup> Consequently, inadequate options for child care force women to shift a greater proportion of their time towards unpaid caregiving and less towards paid work.

In Ontario, the demand for child care exceeds supply. Although upwards of 50 per cent of children aged zero to four



require licensed care in the province, only 20 per cent have access to these programs. It is, however, important to recognize that access to child care extends beyond having sufficient spaces. These spaces must also be affordable, conveniently located, high-quality, and part of a system that is simple to navigate. Ontario has the highest child care fees in the country with some parents paying more than \$1000 per month.<sup>lxiv</sup> With less than 20 per cent of child care spaces subsidized in Ontario,<sup>lxv</sup> an overwhelming majority of families find licensed child care unaffordable. Furthermore, given the rise in insecure employment across Ontario, and the resulting high prevalence of unpredictable scheduling and low wages, licensed child care must not only be affordable, but it should also be close to home or work and accommodate various work schedules (e.g., shift work, irregular hours, overnight).

It is also important to acknowledge that a well-trained, well-compensated workforce is the key to high-quality child care. Studies show that there is a quality advantage for public/non-profit child care compared to for-profit care. Because for-profit centres usually pay lower staff salaries, there is greater turnover as trained early childhood educators move to better-paying jobs. Turnover leads to a lack of continuity for kids, which impacts quality.<sup>lxvi</sup> As a result, if measures are not taken to create conditions for decent work in the province, the public and non-profit child care sector will continue to struggle with recruiting and retaining qualified professionals. More than 20 per cent of registered early childhood educators and more than two-thirds of other program staff make less than \$15 per hour.<sup>lxvii</sup> No one should work full-time and still live in poverty.

**Ontario has the highest child care fees in the country with some parents paying more than \$1000 per month.**

Overall, the OFL is very encouraged to see the government making strides towards ensuring that every child has access to publicly funded, high-quality, and affordable child care. In September 2016, the government announced its intent to expand child care, for children aged zero to four, by 100,000 spaces over the next five years – followed shortly by a

commitment to create 3,400 spaces in this school year. To effectively achieve this objective, however, Ontario's child care framework must be universal. A universal approach promotes social cohesion and leads to lower levels of social inequality, while targeted programs can reinforce social disparities.<sup>lxviii</sup>

Quebec has demonstrated that a universal subsidized child care system is associated with increases in mothers' labour market participation and employment

(particularly in single-parent families), increased tax revenues, and cost savings from fewer people requiring social assistance and other benefits.<sup>lxix</sup> As demonstrated in a 2016 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report, child care fees vary nationally due to provincial policy: the lowest cost is seen in provinces that set fees, while higher fees are prevalent in cities that are market driven.<sup>lxx</sup>



**More than 20 per cent of registered early childhood educators and more than two-thirds of other program staff make less than \$15 per hour.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 19:**

- **Provide funding to ensure that all parents and children can access a universal, publicly funded, high-quality, and affordable child care system in Ontario.**

In partnership with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, the OFL continues to advocate for the right of all parents and children to access a universal, publicly funded, high-quality, and affordable child care system. With the availability of such child care, women are more likely to work, stay employed, and hold better jobs – all of which also contribute to narrowing the gender wage gap.<sup>lxxi</sup> It is estimated that every public dollar invested in child care leads to a \$2.47 in benefit to the Ontario economy due to increases in working hours and wages of women.<sup>lxxii</sup> Providing access to child care will strengthen Ontario's economic prosperity.

Greater funding is therefore needed immediately to support the government's commitment to build 100,000 child care spaces by 2021 because the OFL expects that a significant number of spaces will be created over the next two years.

**It is estimated that every public dollar invested in child care leads to a \$2.47 in benefit to the Ontario economy due to increases in working hours and wages of women.**

## CONCLUSION

Workers in Ontario demand real change.

Bold policy changes are needed such as eliminating precarious work, closing the gender wage gap, eradicating racism, providing a universal basic income, offering universal child care, and creating a tuition-free post-secondary education system.

Together, we must strive for a better Ontario – an Ontario where everyone can share in the prosperity, where Ontarians are built up to realize their full potential, and where our economy is rooted in principles of decency, equity, and fairness.

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

## BUILDING ONTARIANS UP

### Workers

#### RECOMMENDATION 1:

- Introduce broader-based bargaining models to increase access to unionization.
- Allow workers to meaningfully exercise the freedom of association (e.g., reintroduce card-check certification; allow for neutral, online, or telephone voting; legislate early disclosure of workplace information; streamline the remedial certification process; reinstate workers before the first agreement).
- Provide access to first contract arbitration.
- Extend successor rights to protect workers in the case of contract flipping.
- Secure the right to strike (e.g., prohibit the use of replacement workers, safeguard the rights of workers who have been involved in a labour dispute)
- Remove all exemptions and exceptions to the *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Relations Act*.

#### RECOMMENDATION 2:

- Expand the definitions of employer and employee, including joint and several liability as well as related and joint employers.
- Mandate equal pay, benefits, and working conditions for equal work for all workers.
- Enact stronger enforcement for the *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Relations Act*.
- Extend just cause protection to all workers.
- Protect freedom of association by protecting concerted activity.
- Offer paid sick days and adequate vacation.
- Require advanced scheduling notice.
- Provide paid leave for domestic and sexual violence survivors.

### Women

#### RECOMMENDATION 3:

- Perform gender-responsive budgeting.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4:

- Fund, enforce, and expand pay and employment equity law and policy.

#### RECOMMENDATION 5:

- Make it easier for women to join unions by supporting meaningful legislative changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act* through the Changing Workplaces Review.

## Racialized People

#### RECOMMENDATION 6:

- Establish an appropriate annual budget to ensure that the Anti-Racism Directorate has the required resources. All ministries should also have funding allocated to anti-racism initiatives.

#### RECOMMENDATION 7:

- Focus the Anti-Racism Strategy on creating opportunities for racialized workers to thrive by increasing access to unionization, raising employment standards, investing in social programs, and increasing the minimum wage.

## Survivors of Violence

#### RECOMMENDATION 8:

- Legislate ten days of job-protected, paid domestic and sexual violence leave and the provision of survivors to access flexible work arrangements.

#### RECOMMENDATION 9:

- Fund workplace training and education on the impacts and signs of domestic and sexual violence for all managers and workers.

## Injured Workers

#### RECOMMENDATION 10:

- Broaden WSIB coverage to include all occupational sectors and therefore all workers in Ontario.

#### RECOMMENDATION 11:

- Restore funding to IWGFP, specifically designated to fund ONIWG.



## Youth

### RECOMMENDATION 12:

- Provide supports for businesses and post-secondary institutions to ensure that all students can access meaningful and paid work-integrated learning opportunities.

## Low-Income People

### RECOMMENDATION 13:

- Provide a universal basic income now.
- Increase social assistance rates to sit above the poverty line.
- Make social assistance more accessible.
- Remove barriers to paid employment.
- Raise minimum standards and increase access to unionization through the Changing Workplaces Review.
- Expand universal social programs and public services (e.g., child care, housing, pharma care, post-secondary education, social and community services, public pensions).
- Introduce a \$15 per hour minimum wage for all workers.
- Implement a full employment strategy.
- Close the gender wage gap.

## BUILDING ONTARIO UP

## Labour Market

### RECOMMENDATION 14:

- Provide funding to establish and sustain a permanent Labour Market Partners Forum that will speak to a broad range of labour market development issues and opportunities.

## Education

### RECOMMENDATION 15:

- Provide funding to develop a universal, fully-funded system of post-secondary education for all Ontarians.

## Health Care

### RECOMMENDATION 16:

- Commit to increased funding for hospitals to meet patient demands.

## Environment

### RECOMMENDATION 17:

- Redistribute monies raised from the cap and trade program towards ensuring a just transition of the workforce.

## Infrastructure

### RECOMMENDATION 18:

- Stop the privatization of public assets and services, including Hydro One, the OLG, the LCBO as well as Ontario's health care and education systems.

## Child Care

### RECOMMENDATION 19:

- Provide funding to ensure that all parents and children can access a universal, publicly funded, high-quality, and affordable child care system in Ontario.

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2017 Pre-Budget Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Government of Ontario

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The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) represents 54 unions and one million workers.  
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