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May 23, 2017

OFL urges government to go further than recommendations advise in order to protect Ontario workers

(**Toronto, ON**) – There are many missed opportunities in the long-awaited Changing Workplaces Review final recommendations, says the Ontario Federation of Labour. While the report recognizes the urgent need for changes to Ontario’s employment and labour law, it must lead to immediate, meaningful, progressive legislative change that supports Ontario workers.

The Special Advisors’ final report lays out recommendations for changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Relations Act* that are not as far reaching as they should be, said OFL President Chris Buckley.

“Ontario’s employment and labour laws are hopelessly outdated, and we want to ensure that when the government tables legislation based on this report, it does better for workers than the recommendations,” said Buckley. “The government must listen to what workers have been telling them. Ontario workers need changes that will put a stop to the rise of precarious, insecure work across this province.”

The recommendations fail to reintroduce card-based certification or introduce models that will make it easier for workers to organize collectively in Ontario, two measures that would help remove barriers to unionization. Also missing from the recommendations is a ban on replacement workers and automatic access to first contract arbitration.

“Without steps that remove barriers for employees exercising their constitutional right to unionize, like card-based certification, the government will miss the opportunity to create decent work in this province while making it more difficult for working Ontarians to stand up for themselves in the workplace,” said Buckley. “Without significant, meaningful and progressive action, Ontarians will continue to slip into poverty, while employers take advantage of workers who don’t have other options,” he added.

The recommendations also fail to provide for paid sick days, adequate vacation, and just cause protection for all workers in Ontario. They also recommend a reduction in Personal Emergency Leave.

The OFL calls on the government to look at the whole picture and take steps that will end inequality in this province and ensure decent work for all workers, whether they are in a union or not.

“I urge all Ontarians to get involved before these recommendations become legislation, and call their MPPs and talk to them about what Ontario workers need in the workplace. Take this opportunity to make positive change in our province,” said Buckley.

The OFL and its affiliates have been working with its community partners, including the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, to make the needs of Ontario workers clear to MPPs and the Liberal government in advance of impending legislation.

The priorities identified by the OFL and its affiliates will raise the floor for all workers.

To remove barriers for employees exercising their constitutional right to become unionized, 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*.

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.

The OFL and its affiliates also support the immediate increase of the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all Ontario workers.

“We need employment and labour legislation to improve the lives of all workers whether they are in a union or not, and Ontario’s labour movement will keep pushing the government to do the right thing for all Ontario workers,” said Buckley.

The OFL will be looking at the Special Advisors’ recommendations in the coming days to identify those that the government should implement with urgency and those that require improvements to make it fair and best deliver decent work for the people of Ontario.

The OFL’s www.MakeItFair.ca campaign takes on issues of inequality in the workforce, and coincides with the province’s “Changing Workplaces Review.” The campaign gives voice to unions’ demands for across-the-board changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act* that would improve standards for every worker and remove barriers to employees exercising their constitutional rights to become unionized.

For descriptions and information on the priorities identified by the Ontario Federation of Labour and its affiliates, please visit: www.makeitfair.ca/priorities.

The Fight for \$15 & Fairness is a campaign supported by community, labour, student and faith groups across Ontario, calling for sweeping reform to employment and labour laws. Central in the campaign is the demand for a \$15 minimum wage for all workers, regardless of age, student status, job or area of work. For more information, visit 15andfairness.org or follow @fairwagesnow.

For information on the Fight for \$15 and Fairness demands, please visit: <http://15andfairness.org/demands/>.

The OFL represents 54 unions and one million workers in Ontario. For information, visit www.OFL.ca and follow @OFLabour on [Facebook](#) and Twitter.

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