

AN ONTARIO FOR ALL

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR FALL 2020 BUDGET CONSULTATION

October 2020



THE ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR'S
FALL 2020 BUDGET CONSULTATION
to the Minister of Finance, Government of Ontario

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Ontario Federation of Labour
Fall 2020 Budget Consultation

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Government of Ontario
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PREAMBLE

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) respectfully submits the following recommendations to the Minister of Finance's Fall 2020 Budget Consultations.

However, we must note our concern with the constricting and limiting parameters imposed on this consultation. Restricting submissions to a word count and only allocating three minutes of consultation per organization – is clearly not sufficient for an important public consultation such as is required for Ontario Budget 2020.

To view the OFL's complete 2020 Pre-Budget Submission, please visit:

ofl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020-01-14-OFL-prebudget-submission-web.pdf

To view the OFL's complete COVID-19 immediate economic recovery plan – The New Normal, please visit: ofl.ca/wp-content/uploads/20-06-19-SM-Economic-Recovery-Plan.pdf



COVID-19 has effectively shut down entire sectors of our economy or considerably curbed others; has revealed fractures in our institutions and social safety net; and has heightened inequities in the distribution of political, social, and economic power.

As we slowly emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we know the economic climate will remain uncertain, at least for the foreseeable future.

This, however, is not a reason to revert to old ways.

The deregulation of health and safety standards in communities and workplaces, the destabilization of workers' rights and protections, the erosion of progressive taxation, the retrenchment of welfare state programs, and the privatization and chronic underfunding of public services have all led us to this point in time.

Now is the time to invest in people and the public services they depend on – not cut and slash our way back to where we were before.

As the Ontario government prepares for its upcoming budget, and as we respond to the next wave of COVID-19, several guiding principles must be followed:

- 1. Worker and community safety must be the priority.** Our collective goal must be to create a provincial budget and economic recovery plan that restarts Ontario safely for everyone, eliminating potential new waves of COVID-19.
- 2. Workers, unions, and health and safety committees must have a meaningful voice in decisions at every level of policymaking: workplace, community, provincial, and federal.** The reality is that it is workers whose lives and wellbeing are at risk; we need a provincial budget and economic recovery plan that draws from their experiences, knowledge, and strength.
- 3. Investment in infrastructure and public services will be critical in reopening the economy.** Among general uncertainty, weak consumer demand, and high levels of indebtedness, business investment alone will be insufficient. Only strong public investment can lead the recovery, boosting incomes and economic activity that will then stimulate business investment.
- 4. The Ontario as we knew it left far too many behind.** Prior to COVID-19, many Ontarians fell through the cracks of our social safety net. This pandemic has highlighted the need to immediately address the continued marginalization of vulnerable communities.

We need bold policies from government – ones that reflect the hopes for a just world. Collectively, we must reorient what the social and public good can – and should – be.

The government has an opportunity to define a new vision for Ontario. The new normal must ensure healthy and safe workplaces and communities, supported with strong public services, be rooted in justice and equality, and provide opportunity and decent work – for all.

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), which represents 54 affiliated unions and one million workers across the province, believes that the 2020 Ontario budget provides an important opportunity for the Ford government to change course.

Ontario workers and their families demand a government that will address various social, economic, and environmental injustices as well as articulate a bold vision that creates an Ontario for all.

HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACES AND COMMUNITIES FOR ALL



Everyone must have access to healthy, safe, and sustainable communities and workplaces.

Recommendations:

Healthy and safe workplaces and communities for all means that this government must...

- // Establish strong, clear, and enforceable workplace health and safety standards
 - // Require employers to provide workers with adequate levels and types of PPE for workers currently on the job and for those returning to the workplace
- // Order businesses to manufacture PPE in Ontario
- // Enhance infection control standards for all workers, including those directly impacted and on the front-lines
- // Ensure that all workers have stronger protections against retaliation – particularly when workers’ exercise their health and safety rights
- // Increase access to universal, rapid, reliable, and publicly-delivered coronavirus testing; treatment; and the vaccination (once approved) at no cost
- // Oversee an integrated system of recording, reporting, and tracking worker infections – with appropriate safeguards to protect worker data and privacy
- // Improve contact tracing capabilities and remove exposed workers from work with pay, benefits, and without retaliation – and with appropriate safeguards to protect worker data and privacy
- // Guarantee universal workers’ compensation for every worker in Ontario

- // Extend protection of the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* to workers who must be isolated or quarantined because of work exposures, as well as to workers with health conditions that are likely due to COVID-19 but are not verified by testing
- // Streamline the adjudication of COVID-19 workers' compensation claims and protect appeal rights with presumptive relatedness legislation for essential workers
- // Consider the impact of COVID-19 on existing injured workers and occupational disease victims in policy decision-making, including their access to health care and vocational rehabilitation
- // Expand the definition of occupational diseases so workers are treated fairly and without discrimination
- // Expand the definition of compensable injuries to recognize various workplace-related hazards, including vicarious trauma and mesothelioma
- // Ensure workplace disability prevention initiatives are prioritized and properly funded (e.g., Workers Health and Safety Centre, Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers, and Prevention Link)
- // Abolish the unfair practice of deeming at the WSIB
- // Require employer criminal negligence to become a routine part of every workplace death investigation
- // Hold employers accountable for the health and safety of their workers, bring the full force of the law to bear on negligent employers for killing workers
- // Require companies that use temp agencies to be financially responsible under the WSIB for workplace deaths and injuries
- // Implement a zero-tolerance policy for toxic substances, such as asbestos and other harmful chemicals, in workplaces and ensure strong enforcement measures
- // Introduce the precautionary principle approach for all new substances, processes, or job designs in the workplace
- // Collaborate with workers on a high standard, mandatory health and safety accreditation program
- // Secure for all people clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment
- // Achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers
- // Invest in infrastructure and industry to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century
- // Hold big corporate polluters responsible for their actions

PUBLIC SERVICES FOR ALL



Everyone must have access to high-quality public services.

Recommendations:

Public services for all means that this government must...

- // Provide free health care, including in COVID-19 assessment centres, community clinics, and hospitals, for all (regardless of status) – without health card or wait period requirements
- // Take concrete measures to address critical staffing shortages in long-term care; improve infection control, bolster inadequate training and workplace safety; isolate residents who test positive; and intervene in homes that have incompetent or negligent management
- // Demonstrate coherent, coordinated leadership rather than leaving it to voluntary arrangements between provider companies
- // Institute a 4-hour average minimum care standard in long-term care
- // Place a moratorium on all for-profit care (e.g., health care, child care, social services)
- // Ensure that those who have profited from this crisis pay to rebuild collective resources
- // Resist the use of privatized services as a substitute measure to support strained public services – instead, extend public systems
- // Reverse all previous plans to merge and to reduce budgets for various public services
- // Increase access to community mental health and social supports for women and other vulnerable groups affected by unemployment, financial insecurity, isolation, and domestic violence
- // Increase access to affordable and public housing for low-income, homeless, and precariously housed populations

- // Expand the eligibility of access to free child care to include all Ontario workers
 - // Meet or exceed current best practices in Emergency Child Care for reopening, including greatly reduced groups sizes, enhanced staff to child ratios, and full base funding for child care programs
- // Ensure that recipients of social assistance do not encounter claw backs from other income supports
- // Raise social assistance rates and income supports to well above the low-income measure line
- // Lobby the federal government for increased federal transfers that are conditional on public delivery, standards of care, and decent work standards
- // Ensure that any corporate assistance is directly tied to job creation and supports remaining in communities
- // Ensure that big corporations and the wealthy contribute their fair share of taxes
- // Establish, invest in, and strengthen access to publicly delivered universal services and programs – such as health care, mental health care, pharma care, dental care, child care, housing, elementary and secondary education, post-secondary education, social and community services, and public pensions – for all residents
- // Stop the privatization of our public services and assets, including crown corporations as well as our health care, education, child care, and infrastructure systems
- // Ensure that provincial funding models for publicly delivered services only allocate public monies to public / licensed institutions (e.g., education, child care, and health care)
- // Guarantee professional-level wages for all public sector workers
- // Increase hospital funding by at least 5.3 per cent each year to protect service levels and rebuild capacity
- // Boost investment in the EMS system to meet the annual six per cent growth in demand
- // Invest a minimum \$2.4 billion in new funding over the next four years in mental health care
- // Revamp the education funding formula, invest money to fix crumbling schools, and restore the programs, services, policies and staffing needed in each community for students to succeed
- // Demand that school boards immediately respond to the safety concerns, suggestions, and demands being put forward by educational workers and their unions

- // Maintain the current Full-Day Kindergarten model with a full-time certified teacher and a designated early childhood educator
- // Create a comprehensive provincial social housing program that treats housing as a public utility
- // Build non-profit, affordable child care spaces as well as putting an end to licensing new for-profit child care centres
- // Eliminate tuition fees for all post-secondary students and removing interest on existing student loans
- // Increase social assistance rates to well above the poverty line
- // Expand access to social assistance for all persons regardless of their immigration status and providing supports with dignity

JUSTICE FOR ALL



Everyone must be treated fairly.

Recommendations:

Justice for all means that this government must...

- // Establish gender-equity and other inclusivity targets for quickly achieving full employment
- // Ensure immediate access to clean water for all Indigenous communities so that individuals can practice short-term prevention measures and prevent the spread of COVID-19
- // Fund, collect and publish provincial data on the impacts of COVID-19 on equity-seeking Ontarians, including how women; Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people; individuals with disabilities; 2SLGBTQ+ people; and immigrants and migrants are disproportionately affected by this pandemic
- // Promote justice and equity by repairing historic, discontinuing current, and preventing future oppression of Indigenous communities, communities of colour, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities as well as other affected communities
- // Agitate for a whole-of-government approach that is equity focused and intersectional (e.g., anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, anti-racist, feminist, anti-ableist, and 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive)
- // Challenge fascism, white supremacy, colonialism, racism, bigotry, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia in all its forms
- // Eliminate systemic xenophobia, anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia including from government polices and services – like policing institutions, school boards, children’s aid societies, the environment – the workforce as well as decision-making bodies (e.g., funding decisions)

- // Strengthen and expand the scope and mandate of the Anti-Racism Directorate
- // Abolish the discriminatory practice of racial profiling (e.g., carding)
- // Adopt the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations
- // Adopt the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and support the principle of self-governance for Indigenous peoples
- // Demand permanent resident status and family unity for all current migrants and refugees as well as landed status on arrival for those in the future
- // Establish Ontario as a sanctuary province for those that have been deported and treated negatively by policies of exclusion
- // Close the wage gap through funding, enforcing, and expanding pay equity and employment equity legislation
- // Reaffirm the commitment to the inviolable right of women and transgender persons to have autonomy of all decisions regarding their persons
- // Demand an economic justice strategy that promotes women's meaningful participation in the workforce; recognizes the care penalty imposed in female-dominated employment; and improves access to public programs and services (e.g., child care)
- // End violence against women through a comprehensive action framework that focuses on prevention, supports, and services
- // Ensure adequate, stable, long-term funding for immigration and refugee legal aid services
- // Break down barriers for workers with accommodations and integrate persons with disabilities into every aspect of the workplace and society
- // Ensure that adequate supports are available in every community to meet the needs of all people with chronic, long-term disabilities
- // Establish the Disability Rights Secretariat
- // Create 2SLGBTQI+ friendly environments, including for seniors, where people want to come out and live their authentic lives
- // Ensure that 2SLGBTQI+ people have access to appropriate and timely health care options that are friendly, competent, and meet their respective needs
- // Fund solutions designed to eliminate the prevalence of suicide attempts among 2SLGBTQI+ youth through increased supports, like mental health services and housing
- // End violence against Trans peoples, particularly those that identify through an intersectional lens

DECENT WORK FOR ALL



Everyone must have decent work conditions to make Ontario a better place to work and live.

Recommendations:

Decent working conditions for all means that this government must...

- // Expand the eligibility of pandemic premium pay to include all front-line workers
- // Ensure pandemic premium pay is permanent for all front-line workers
- // Introduce a livable minimum wage without exceptions
- // Provide permanent paid sick days, plus paid days during an outbreak for all workers
- // Strengthen protections for temporary agency and migrant workers
- // Honour and respect collective agreements and their contract provisions
- // Remove the one per cent cap on public sector compensation packages
- // Stop layoffs or re-hire any public sector workers who have been laid off or dismissed during the pandemic
- // Ensure that workers have the right to return to their job, if they choose, when the sector reopens
- // Explore conditional economic supports and agreements that will help employers keep workers employed
- // Ensure that equity-seeking groups have access to apprenticeships and on-the-job learning opportunities
- // Encourage employers to explore flexible workweeks – with strict adherence to the *Employment Standards Act*
- // Establish equal pay for equal work standards, greater enforcement, and close existent loopholes

- // Ensure fairer scheduling laws
- // Create job-protected paid leave for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence and expand the definition of Domestic Violence to include emotional abuse
- // Develop – in consultation with labour – a portable, publicly run benefits program for workers not covered by a workplace benefits plan
- // Guarantee that every worker is covered under the *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) and the *Labour Relations Act* (LRA)
- // Recognize that the collective bargaining process no longer only occurs between one union and one employer within an individual workplace
- // Extend card-based certification to all sectors
- // Make it easier to certify a union when the employer has contravened the LRA
- // Provide automatic access to first contract arbitration in all cases
- // Extend successor rights to all contracted services
- // Guarantee the right of employees to return to work following a lawful strike or lockout
- // Stop interfering in the collective bargaining process like introducing back-to-work legislation, allowing replacement workers, breaking contracts, and legislating maximums on bargained working conditions and forms of compensation
- // Prioritize workers' rights, consumer protection, and tax compliance in all new and emerging business models
- // Increase access to meaningful paid work-integrated learning opportunities for students
- // Strengthen benefit security for existing pension plan members and expanding coverage to the millions without any employer pension plan
- // Promote defined benefit pension plans over all other retirement schemes
- // Prioritize workers' wages, severance pay, and pension funds over all other creditors in the case of bankruptcy
- // Increase pension insurance coverage to reflect inflationary pressures
- // Ensure members have a voice when significant changes are made to pension plan funding

CONCLUSION

THE SUCCESS OF THE WORKING CLASS – AND THE ONTARIO ECONOMY – RELIES ON THE GOVERNMENT’S ABILITY TO DELIVER AN ONTARIO FOR ALL.

Among other revelations, COVID-19 has demonstrated the critical role that government holds in ensuring the wellbeing of its citizens. Ontarians need an equitable and just economic recovery plan and budget that is centered around their health and safety, robust work standards and protections, and significant investments in public services and infrastructure. The success of the working class – and the Ontario economy – relies on the government’s ability to deliver an Ontario for all.

Nothing is inevitable or unchangeable – not the retraction of decent working conditions; not the loss of middle-class jobs; not the rise in economic inequality; not the underfunding and privatization of our public services; not the prevalence of hate, violence, and discrimination; and not the destruction of our workplaces, communities, and planet.

Ontarians require leadership that champions and acts on issues that have the greatest potential to improve the lives of the working class – moving us towards a long-term vision of strong public services, decent work, equity and justice, and healthy and safe workplaces and communities for all.

The Ontario Federation of Labour is hopeful that the preceding recommendations help inform the development of the 2020 budget, Ontario’s economic recovery and the governments upcoming legislative agenda.

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NOTES

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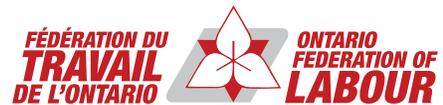


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