



Submission to the Ministry of Labour On the Changing Workplaces Review

Good Afternoon. My name is Domenic Bellissimo and I am here on behalf of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation to present to you our brief on the Changing Workplaces Review.

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation founded in 1919, OSSTF/FEESO represents almost 60,000 public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, instructors, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, and many other educational workers.

The mandate of the federation is to promote and safeguard the interests of our members and also to protect and enhance public education on behalf of the students enrolled within it. We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at this consultation and look forward to your report at the conclusion of the process.

First, although your terms of reference specifically state that the minimum wage is not part of these consultations, **we, nonetheless, urge you to consider the importance of raising it.** Thousands of students and their parents in our schools tell us that minimum wage jobs are no longer the entry level point for young people wanting to develop skills in their first part time job – it is the wage of hundreds of thousands of adults trapped in low paying jobs for extended periods of time.

We recommend that it be raised to \$15 an hour and then adjusted for inflation annually. Only a \$15 minimum wage will help to raise people out of poverty-level jobs. The current \$11 an hour is insufficient for that and will only continue to condemn those workers to poverty. Please note that a \$15 minimum wage will have a positive impact on the economy as those workers will have more disposable income, therefore leading to a net positive impact on the economy.

Second, we need to update labour laws and modernize them given the changes in the nature of work. We are particularly concerned with the plight of precarious and vulnerable workers. We hear too many stories of workers, like temporary agency workers, who are not paid a decent wage. We need to insist that temporary agency employees receive the same wage and benefits as permanent employees. Temporary agencies are usually paid a wage above what a contracting company's permanent employee would be paid hourly. There should be no reason that the temporary worker should not be paid what the company's permanent employee would have been earning. No temporary agency should be allowed to commit wage theft.

We also need to stop the wage theft that occurs when employers pass on business costs to employees such as purchasing cleaning supplies for cleaners, or car maintenance and gas for couriers, or restaurant servers paying for serving materials.

Also, we need to ensure that no discrimination takes place in pay and working conditions for workers doing the same work. We need equal pay for equal work for all including women, racialized workers, immigrant workers and young workers.

We also need to address the issue of a migrant workers' bill of rights. While we understand that the temporary foreign workers' program is under federal jurisdiction that should not stop Ontario from doing everything possible within its powers to protect these vulnerable workers. Having temporary, and usually racialized, workers not being granted permanent immigrant status upon their arrival to Canada runs counter to much of our immigration tradition.

Rather than encouraging newcomers to build a new life in Canada, many temporary workers are deprived of the opportunity to seek permanent status and are reconciled to temporary jobs with little regard for their well-being. We need to ensure that migrant workers are not exploited as they are in many other countries. We should not become a country that uses and abuses the dreams and aspirations of newcomers. Our strength has been built on welcoming newly arrived residents to join us in building a better society and not in exploiting them for our selfish needs. Therefore, we urge you to work to give temporary workers and undocumented workers the same employment rights as all other workers regardless of their immigration status.

Being an organizing union, we know the frustrations experienced when workers want to join a union. We urge you to recommend card check certification which allows for employees to form a union with minimal interference by a recalcitrant employer. Card certification is a much more straight forward process that diminishes the ability of any employer to intimidate employees from joining a union before a labour board vote. We have seen the lengthening of the process for joining a union become prone to abuse and intimidation and have seen a reluctance by employees to join a union when their employer has more time to oppose its inception.

We also recommend the adoption of first contract arbitration which will provide additional routes for all to access binding arbitration. Too many times, the inability to have first contract arbitration creates work stoppages. Having better access to it will lead to fewer work stoppages and more negotiated settlements which is the best option for all concerned, employers and employees.

Another issue that we want to address is successor rights in the contract sector. We see many employees lose security and pay when their employers move from the unionized to non-unionized field, even though employees are continuing to do the same work.

We urge you to extend successor rights to vulnerable workers in these contract services sector. We have witnessed this practice first hand in the office cleaning business.

And finally, the tragic events unfolding currently at Crown Holdings can manufacturing in the GTA reinforce the desperate need for anti-scab legislation in Ontario which is enforceable.

As you hear from many interested parties and individuals during your review, we urge you to be diligent in enforcing fairness in your report. Thank you for your time.

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