

FIGHT FOR **\$15 & FAIRNESS**

Advisory – For immediate release:

Ontario stands up for \$15 and Fairness – Rally at Queen’s Park on October 1st

TORONTO, September 29, 2016 – Thousands of workers from across Ontario will gather at Queen’s Park on October 1st to kick off Decent Work Week celebrations by calling for \$15 and Fairness for all workers.

When: Saturday, October 1, 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm

Where: 12:30 pm: Northwest corner of College Street & University Avenue
1:00 pm: Queen’s Park

Photo opportunity: Visuals will include colourful banners, costumes, performances, art pieces

Interview opportunity:... Erendira Bravo, Construction worker
Gayle McFadden, Student advocate
Deb Henry, Grocery store worker
Marjorie Knight, Community advocate
Kristina Torres, Migrant caregiver

“Through the Changing Workplaces Review, the Ontario Government has an important opportunity to deliver fairness for Ontario workers. We need extensive legislative changes to update Ontario’s labour laws and to help make work better for all of us,” says Marjorie Knight a student and worker who will be traveling to the rally from Kitchener.

The Fight for \$15 & Fairness is calling for sweeping reforms, including fair scheduling; further regulating temporary agencies; investing in pro-active, public enforcement of employment laws; imposing meaningful fines for labour law infractions; legislating seven paid sick days; an end to contract flipping; easier access to unions and a \$15 minimum wage.

“October 1 is important because Ontario’s minimum wage will be adjusted by 15 cents to keep up with price increases as measured by the Consumer Price Index,” says Deb Henry, a retail worker from Toronto. “While indexation is essential, you need to realize a full-time worker earning \$11.40 per hour will still be 16% below Ontario’s poverty line. We need at least \$15 an hour.”

“Because of exemptions and loopholes in the *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) far too many workers won’t receive even \$11.40 an hour,” says Gayle McFadden, National Executive Representative of Canadian Federation of Students, says: “Students under the age of 18 are paid 70 cents less, and liquor servers are paid even worse. There should be equal pay for equal work, full stop.”

According to the Fight for \$15 and Fairness, less than 25 percent of all workers are now fully protected by the ESA. "People like us are left out. There are too many exemptions in the laws that make migrant workers vulnerable. We are terrified of speaking out even when we do have rights because of the risk of deportation," says caregiver Kristina Torres, part of a group of migrant workers from the Migrant Workers Alliance who will be dressed up as robots on October 1. "We are human beings, we all deserve full rights, and without them we are treated like machines."

"Whether we are unionized or not, we need fairer rules that protect all of us, no matter if we work full-time or part-time, casual, temporary, or as sub-contractors," says Erendira Bravo, a construction worker. "And we need pro-active enforcement. Without that, the most vulnerable workers will not receive the wages and protections they are entitled to under the law. That's what we mean when we say we need \$15 and Fairness."

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