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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

Fair Workplaces,
Better Jobs Act, 2017

2nd Session
41st Parliament

Tuesday 31 October 2017

**Comité permanent
des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Loi de 2017 pour l'équité
en milieu de travail
et de meilleurs emplois

2^e session
41^e législature

Mardi 31 octobre 2017

Chair: Ann Hoggarth
Clerk: Eric Rennie

Présidente : Ann Hoggarth
Greffier : Eric Rennie

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**
**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES**

Tuesday 31 October 2017

Mardi 31 octobre 2017

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

**FAIR WORKPLACES, BETTER JOBS
ACT, 2017**
**LOI DE 2017 POUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MILIEU
DE TRAVAIL ET DE MEILLEURS EMPLOIS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and to make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Good morning. We're meeting here this morning for public hearings on Bill 148, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and to make related amendments to other Acts.

Each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by up to nine minutes of questioning from the committee. As this is an extension of the Legislature, there can be no clapping, cheering or wearing of any kind of political material. Are there any questions before we begin?

**ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES
OF ONTARIO**

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I'll call our first witness, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Good morning. Please identify yourselves for the purposes of Hansard, and you may begin your five-minute presentation.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. Lynn Dollin. I am the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. With me today is Monika Turner, director of policy for AMO.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario appreciates the opportunity to contribute again to your deliberations about Bill 148. We provided a written submission for your previous deliberations as we were not selected to appear. The Clerk has given you a copy of our current submission with proposed amendments.

Municipal employers have been told repeatedly that municipal governments were not the intended target of this bill. Municipal governments employ about 250,000

people. About 70% are unionized; the remaining 30% function under agreements that mirror collective agreements. We are employers of choice. We pay good wages, have good benefit packages and provide stable employment throughout the province. We are the front line of service delivery. Likewise, we are the front line in emergency or disaster situations as well. Without several specific amendments to this bill, there will be great harm to our ability to provide vital municipal services.

Four priority amendments must be made so that municipal governments can deliver their statutory obligations.

Section 21.4 must exempt municipal and local board employees who are required to be on call to provide statutory public safety services. These employees are already compensated for this and/or are subject to on-call provisions through their collective agreement.

This exemption is needed well beyond just emergency services. It needs to include water operations, public works, long-term care, child care, emergency management, municipal airport operations, public health etc. Think of if a tornado or a major flood hits a community. What municipal staff need to come to work immediately for public safety reasons?

Further, 21.4 needs to clarify that this exemption extends to supervisory and managerial employees with respect to paid on-call.

Section 42.1 is particularly problematic. It speaks to equal pay for equal work, an issue municipal governments dealt with years ago under pay and employment equity requirements. Bill 148, as drafted, will destabilize composite fire departments where both full-time and volunteer firefighters work. We do not believe this was intentional; however, it will have massive impacts on volunteer firefighters if not amended.

Volunteer firefighters do not attend the workplace for a shift. Rather, they are on an on-call list. When a fire occurs, they are notified. Full-time firefighters must attend a call—volunteers do not, which is why their roster is large and what makes them volunteers. The bill is not clear enough on whether volunteers are going to be captured. This is why we seek an amendment to clearly exempt volunteer firefighters.

Finally, municipal governments are subject to some 200 other pieces of legislation, any of which have statutory obligations to sustain public safety. The bill needs specifically to state that Bill 148 requirements do not override other statutory obligations that municipal governments are required to provide for public safety.

Thank you for the committee's amendment to section 21.5 regarding refusing a call-in due to short notice.

There are many other legislative amendment changes that municipal governments would like to see and that are contained in the appendix on today's written submission.

Today, given the allotted time, we have focused on critical changes municipal governments require. Thank you for your attention, and we're happy to take questions that you might have.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. This round of questioning will begin with the government. MPP Vernile.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much. Good morning and welcome to Queen's Park. It's good to see you, Lynn.

I recall back in July, when this committee was travelling and they made a stop in Kitchener, there was a representative from the city of Cambridge, which belongs to AMO. This representative said that in the city of Cambridge they already went to a living wage, so there's a municipality that is getting ahead of this and supports the concept of providing \$15 an hour. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: We think that most municipal government staff earn minimum wage or over. Minimum wage increases may affect some entry-level or student positions, but certainly the vast majority of municipal employees make well over minimum wage. AMO does recognize that it may have an impact on local economies and trusts that the committee will consider these impacts as you make your amendments.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: When the bill was first introduced, your organization did raise some concerns about scheduling provisions. You've talked about that now, and this is tied to some municipal services, such as snowplowing, road safety and fire services. During the first round of clause-by-clause, we amended the scheduling provision. Can I get your feedback on that? What are your thoughts on the changes that were made?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: We were happy with the changes made. That was in my comments made about the changes to section 21.5. We can't tell four days in advance when the snow is going to fall, so we really need snowplow operators to come to work and not be able to refuse a shift because we hadn't given them enough notice.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You're looking for an exemption for volunteer firefighters. Can you talk a little more about that? Why is that necessary?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Certainly. Over half of Ontario's municipalities have volunteer firefighters, but the certain at-risk component are the ones that have—I think there are about 32 fire departments that have both full-time and volunteer working together. In halls where it's a large municipality, they might have full-time in the urban portion of the municipality and then part-time or volunteer in the rural section of the municipality. We're concerned that, for equal pay, for equal work, the volunteers would be required to all turn into full-time employees, and that simply isn't fiscally sustainable in parts of Ontario.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Lynn, thank you very much for being here today and for informing us on this as we move forward.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): We'll move to the official opposition. MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Lynn, for joining us this morning.

I was at a meeting recently with the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, of course, who are all members of AMO. They delineated what this bill was going to mean for a number of their municipalities with regard to increasing costs if not in some ways amended. The member opposite talks about the changes that were made but not about the changes that have yet to be made and how it impacts municipalities.

The government is well aware of the hybrid fire departments that exist across the province of Ontario. This is not new news; this process has been going on for years. Is it a lack of consultation or a lack of interest? How did they get it so wrong that they never understood the impact to municipalities that this bill would have?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Through you, Madam Chair, the reason we're here today is to put a face to the problem and to give you some facts and figures about what it could cost. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus certainly has talked to us, and we do talk to them a lot.

I'm going to give you a couple of examples of other communities. The city of London estimates it will cost \$1 million in 2018 and another \$1 million in 2019. One member, a small urban community in southwest Ontario, has estimated that Bill 148 will have a \$2-million impact just in the first year. A community of 50,000 north of Toronto has estimated it will be an additional half a million to put into place the Bill 148 provisions for 2018, with further impacts in 2019. A large city in the GTA has estimated it will cost them \$1.3 million to implement Bill 148 next year. For EMS services across the province, one front-line paramedic for each of the 52 EMS services to comply with all the on-call provisions would be in the order of about \$2 million a year.

0910

Mr. John Yakabuski: So we're talking about a massive amount of money at a time when the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund continues to be cut. We're talking about funding decreases to municipalities and foisting huge increases on them if they don't amend some of the provisions in this bill. They're in government; they understand how government entities work and they know that the municipalities are the front line in a disaster, in an emergency. It boggles my mind.

Did they not consult with you directly when they were drafting this legislation?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: We have had several meetings through the MOU process and with the minister. Our message back is that the expert panel for the Changing Workplaces Review recommended that the government adopt a sector-specific approach to the regulation of scheduling, and we agree and are asking for this for the

municipal sector related to statutory public safety services—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We'll move to the third party. MPP Forster.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you for being here today.

I would guess that the vast majority of municipalities are unionized, that their front-line workers are unionized.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: About 70%.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And that they have collective agreements that have superior scheduling and call-in provisions to this legislation.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Yes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: So why is it that you're calling for an exemption?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: We're calling for an exemption so that they aren't captured in this because they already have that. If they have an on-call provision, but then the bill also calls for them to be paid extra for on-call, we're saying that shouldn't be required because the compensation that they're given already anticipates that they are going to be on call.

Ms. Cindy Forster: But in most of those situations, it would be superior to this language, in any event.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: That would be my guess.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Right. You're just trying to make sure that the workforce isn't going to get a double premium because it's in the ESA.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: That's correct.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Generally, collective agreements supersede the Employment Standards Act where they're better; right?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: That's certainly our position; also, the fact that we have other legislation and we don't want this legislation to trump the other legislation that we also have to abide by.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Now, you also talked about the \$15 minimum wage really not impacting the vast majority of the workforce in municipalities. But, in fact, you do have students and under the current legislation that the government is proposing—they're proposing an exemption for students. So your lifeguards and people who run your camps wouldn't be entitled to a \$15 minimum wage. What is your opinion on that?

Ms. Lynn Dollin: The minimum wage requirement is really something that we've been looking at from our employer standpoint and our full-time employer standpoint. We certainly feel that there will be an impact. We've heard from some of our members of impact through economic development in their community and perhaps losing businesses. We have heard some of that, but because we don't have all of the data that goes with that, we're leaning on other organizations that can speak to that better than we can. We're concerned more about the workers that we have.

Certainly, the issue with the summer student would be if it's equal pay for equal work. Is the summer student who comes in to help out in the summer for parks and recreation then required to be paid the same amount as

someone who has 10 years, 25, 30 years? We're in agreement with the students being exempted.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you very much for your presentation. If you have a further written submission, it must be to the Clerk by 5 p.m. on Friday, November 3. Thank you.

Ms. Lynn Dollin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Our next presenter is the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. Good morning. When you get settled, please identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard, and your five minutes will begin.

Mr. Ron Elliot: Good morning. My name is Ron Elliot. I'm the chief negotiator for the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, better known as OPSEU.

Before I took this role, I was an OPSEU activist and regional vice-president. In my day job, I was an occupational health and safety officer for the Ministry of Labour. I started working for the Ministry of Labour in 1986. My whole career has been around labour laws in this province and the impact on the workplace. I am extremely proud to be here on behalf of the 130,000 OPSEU members.

I want to start by thanking the government, not only for tabling this bill in the first place but also for its extensive consultation on what should be in it. Our union first got involved in the consultation in July 2015 when I made a presentation to the Changing Workplaces Review, and we have commented on the development of the legislation every step of the way.

As time is short today, I only want to talk about one thing, and that's first-contract arbitration.

Thirty-two years ago, Liberal Labour Minister Bill Wrye rose in the Legislature to explain why first-contract arbitration is so important. He said:

"In the normal course of events ... certification should lead to a collective agreement...."

"If certification is followed by a collective agreement, the foundation is laid for a longer-term, stable relationship with a mechanism to address outstanding problems. Where, on the other hand, the momentum of an organizing campaign and the desired expression of the majority for a collective agreement are frustrated at the bargaining table, there is a natural tendency for the employer to regard the union's defeat as vindication of its own position, and there is a risk that legitimate concerns of the workforce may be ignored."

Take it from me: When an employer has actively opposed an organizing drive, that same employer will often place roadblocks in the way of successful negotiation of a first contract. This always means lengthy negotiations, and it frequently means long strikes or lockouts.

First-contract arbitration gives the parties a way to turn an unstable relationship into a stable one and to do it in a fair and timely manner.

As currently written, Bill 148 will have the option to choose first-contract arbitration as a way to settle disputes. But it will also allow the board to let strikes or lockouts continue for months on end. This is wrong. This makes no sense. In a first-contract-arbitration situation, the law should not allow strikes or lockouts to continue when one of the parties has already called for arbitration. Changing Bill 148 to allow first-contract arbitration, plain and simple, is a straightforward solution to the problem, and it must be a solution for all workers. Right now, even the flawed process contained in Bill 148 will not be available for workers in the college system. This must be changed.

In the last two years, OPSEU has started and completed the two largest organizing drives in Canadian history. Part-time college support workers voted for certification in June 2016. Contract faculty voted for certification earlier this month. Both votes came long after the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, which made it legal for these workers to unionize. The nine years it has taken to get to this point show just how difficult it can be for workers to unionize when (a) they work at more than 100 locations across the province, (b) they are required by law to be in a single bargaining unit, and (c) their employer aggressively opposes organizing attempts.

I cannot predict how the College Employer Council is likely to behave in bargaining once the votes are counted and these workers are unionized. But based on our experience, which has seen colleges spend millions of dollars on lawyers to prevent unionization, you can understand why the union might be concerned that the employer will attempt to prevent a first contract rather than bargain one.

Automatic first-contract arbitration must be available to Ontario college workers and to all workers in the province who unionize to improve their wages and working conditions.

The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act is a landmark piece of legislation. From the start, its goal has been to improve the lives and livelihoods of workers in low-wage jobs, part-time jobs, temporary jobs and insecure jobs—all those jobs that typically fall under the heading of “precarious work.” OPSEU supports this wholeheartedly—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We’ll start with the official opposition. MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Go ahead, if you’d like to finish your presentation, Ron.

Mr. Ron Elliot: Thank you.

OPSEU supports this wholeheartedly. In newly organized bargaining units where the parties cannot negotiate a first collective agreement, we believe that either party should be able to send outstanding matters to arbitration.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

0920

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you for your presentation. I certainly understand your issue on the face of it. I think that most people would expect that if the decision

has been made to unionize, both sides are better off if people are working, not fighting over a contract.

The reality is that you’ll need to get that amendment through, and the only ones who can decide whether that amendment would work are the government. There have been amendments proposed after second reading. My colleague in the NDP proposed an amendment that would give 10 paid days of leave for people who are suffering as victims of sexual or domestic violence, and the Liberals voted that amendment down at committee.

I would suggest that you bring that amendment as part of your submission. I don’t have any problem with that kind of amendment. There are things in this bill that we don’t support, and we only get one vote when it comes down to the bill. That’s the thing about legislation: You get one vote in the Legislature. But this one is something that I could certainly get my head around, and I think it would be in the best interest of everybody to be able to settle these contracts in a timely fashion. Thank you very much for bringing that forward today.

Mr. Ron Elliot: On first-contract arbitration, Bill 148 amends the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act and it amends the Ontario Labour Relations Act. We’re asking also for first-contract arbitration to go in the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. I just think it was probably missed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Have you had further discussions with the government since the second reading debate?

Mr. Ron Elliot: We’ve written and talked to Premier Wynne’s staff and Minister Flynn’s staff.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And what kind of response have you received from them?

Mr. Ron Elliot: We’re hoping the response will be after today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate you coming in.

Mr. Ron Elliot: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): We move to the third party. MPP Forster.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you very much for being here today.

I think you’re being very generous saying that it was just missed, because I can tell you, when you go through Bill 148, there is a lot of discrimination between sectors that is actually part of the government’s proposals in the bill—for example, card-check certification, but just for certain sectors.

What’s the easiest way to make a better living in this province? Joining a union and having a union negotiate better working conditions and better wages for its employees. To not include the colleges in first-contract arbitration, in my view, is discriminatory. You can’t pick one sector over the other.

My office and I, and many of the members here, reviewed probably 1,500 proposals and presentations that have come forward from the public, from both sides—from business, from labour and from poverty activists—and I would say that in all that I have reviewed, and it has

been many, there was really only one person who spoke against card-check and first-contract arbitration out of all of those presentations that I've listened to over the last six or eight months.

I'm glad you're here zoning in on this. The college workers need to be included, and the government needs to get them back to work.

Mr. Ron Elliot: Yes, we're working on that now, and first-contract arbitration may solve a couple of labour disputes in the future.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): We move to the government. MPP Anderson.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Hi, Ron. How are you?

Mr. Ron Elliot: I'm well, thank you.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Good, good. I used to be a member of OPSEU too. I was at the Ministry of Labour.

Mr. Ron Elliot: Oh, really?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I was a mediator there for a while. I won't tell you for how long—I'd give away my age—but a long time. It's good to see you.

Were you happy with the amendments that mandate employers to give a statutory declaration of the number of employees in a bargaining unit?

Mr. Ron Elliot: I'm sorry, I missed that.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Are you happy with the amendments that give employers the statutory directive to give a declaration of the number of members in a bargaining unit?

Mr. Ron Elliot: That is a good part, absolutely.

Mr. Granville Anderson: How is that helpful to you?

Mr. Ron Elliot: It's helpful in the organizing drive after which defines the bargaining unit.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Apart from the one section that you alluded to earlier, you are happy with the bill overall and—

Mr. Ron Elliot: No one can say they're unhappy with this bill. This is very energetic on the part of the government, but it still has flaws. We've made a number of presentations and made major briefs on first-contract arbitration, on card-check, on all kinds of things about defining bargaining units and how this can help. This bill does nothing but help labour, but we would hope it would go further.

Mr. Granville Anderson: How much time do I have left?

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Almost a minute.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Okay. Can you describe a situation where the ability to request employees to list after 20% membership would be beneficial for both the employer and a trade union?

Mr. Ron Elliot: Yes. It stops bickering in the workplace. Once you get 20% and you get a list of the employees, it's better for both sides. Often, it costs business a lot of money. It deteriorates labour relations when we fight over these things. If people want to unionize, they should be able to unionize, period.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

Mr. Ron Elliot: I would just reiterate that I hope the government will see its way to putting first-contract arbitration into the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you for your submission. If you have a further written submission, it needs to be sent to the Clerk of the Committee by 5 p.m. on Friday, November 3.

Mr. Ron Elliot: Thank you all.

INTERFAITH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM COALITION

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Our next presenter will be the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition.

When you get settled, please identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard, and then your five-minute presentation will begin.

Ms. Marcia Gilbert: My name is Marcia Gilbert. I'm the coordinator for ISARC, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition. I'm joined here today by Rabbi Shalom Schachter, who is on the executive of our organization.

We're an organization that represents the 28 faith groups across Ontario. We're the faith leaders who work day to day with the people that this legislation will address, those people who are in precarious work situations. We hear from these people in our churches, in our temples, in our synagogues, in our mosques and all kinds of other religious institutions, and they need some swift and clear action to help them lead a better life. A lot of these people are in pain, and this legislation needs to help them out of their current situations.

I'm joined here by Rabbi Schachter. Before I pass the microphone over to him, I want to make sure to invite everybody here to the faith leaders' forum that's going to be taking place here on Thursday in room 228/230. All MPPs are invited to join us for lunch.

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: I'm Rabbi Shalom Schachter.

We'd like to focus in our supplementary submissions on areas where the language of the bill doesn't seem to reflect the purposes. One area is where, unfortunately, the committee made backward amendments in its first set of clause-by-clause in terms of scheduling and in terms of equal pay.

One of the documents that we circulated is the motion from Toronto city council that, first of all, expressed support for Bill 148 and specifically focuses on the scheduling and equal pay and asks you to tighten them up.

We listened to the AMO presentation earlier this morning, and their concerns don't seem to be shared by all municipalities in Ontario. Certainly, the city of Toronto didn't have those concerns. Specifically, when it comes to requiring people to come in with less than 48 hours' notice and their request for an exemption, the bill already provides that if you put people on call and you pay them for being on call, then the employer will be able to impose a less-than-96-hours obligation to come in.

0930

Another area is in the hours-worked definition for seniority. This again is going to prevent part-timers from getting equal pay, and the employer will still have an advantage. If you have two part-timers, each working half-time, during the year each will work 975 hours, so together they will work 1,950 hours. A full-timer will work 1,950 hours. The full-timer will go up the grid at the end of one year, but the part-timers will have to work two years to get up the grid. The employer, using part-timers, is going to be able to get 3,900 hours at the lower rate of pay before they have to raise the pay, whereas if they employ a full-timer, it will just be the 1,950 hours.

In terms of just cause, the objective seems to be to prevent the employer from engaging in mischief during an effort to get a collective agreement. The bill puts that in at the time of certification. But you heard from OPSEU that the employer mischief can start as soon as they know of the organizing campaign. Really, just cause in the Labour Relations Act should be triggered from the time the employer finds out about it—either if there's a request for the list or, certainly, when there is an application for certification.

But more importantly, just cause should be put into the Employment Standards Act, because most workers are not going to insist on their rights being respected if there is a fear of retaliation. The best way to ensure that that fear is eliminated is to put in just cause—like it is in the federal labour code—for all employees, not just for unionized employees.

We heard in the earlier submissions that one employer said they're going to avoid having to pay the three-week vacation to people after five years by letting them go before the five years. Again, you need to have just cause in the Employment Standards Act to prevent this kind of offence.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you very much. We'll go to the third party. MPP Forster.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Feel free to use my time to finish your presentation.

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: I was going to talk about contract flipping. The law already provides successor rights for everybody—for public sector employees and private sector employees—when there is a sale of a business. Contract flipping is just a portion of a sale of a business. For the full sale of a business, if everybody gets successor rights, why shouldn't that exist also in all cases of contract flipping?

In terms of the lists that you were talking about for employees in organizing campaigns, workers who are seeking to organize should have the same access to information about the bargaining unit that the employer who's going to fight it has. The list needs to also include the home addresses. It also needs to include the job classifications.

When you are running for a public election, you know who you need to go to to sign your nomination papers. You have the voters list; it has the home addresses. It has it organized by poll, so you can approach people with

their specific community of interest. In order to do that in a workplace unionizing campaign, we need to know the classifications—whether people are part-time—and we need to have their home addresses.

Finally, in terms of temporary help agencies, it's very easy for them to shut down and open up with another name the next day. In order to be able to enforce rights against temporary help agencies, we really need to make the clients of temporary help agencies jointly and severally liable for the temporary help agencies' obligations.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Do I have any time left?

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Yes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Can you just explain a little bit in more detail about the contract flipping, as it relates to the successor rights? There are successor rights in law. What were you trying to get at with respect to the contract flipping?

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: Let's take, for example, home care. The CCAC gives a contract to ABC company. ABC's employees unionize. They negotiate a collective agreement and they raise their wages. When ABC's contract comes up for renewal, their costs are going to be higher, so the CCAC is going to give the contract to somebody else. Because it's not a sale of a business from ABC company to DEF company, but it goes through the real employer, the successor rights, as it now stands, don't cover them. That's why we need to have it for contract flipping. The government's bringing it in for building services, but there's no justification to restrict it to building services. It should apply across sectors throughout the province.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Right. We experienced that, certainly, when I was working in the home care sector, where we would organize ParaMed in Sarnia—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We'll now move to the government. MPP Malhi.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you so much for your presentation. I know that you talked a little bit about your concerns around precarious employment, but this bill targets more than just \$15-an-hour wages. It does have some new things that we will be doing to battle the challenges that we have with precarious employment. Could you talk about some of the things that we are doing and the impacts that you think they will have?

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: The equal pay provision, if it is reworded to really apply to everyone, will be of immense benefit to people who right now have part-time or temporary work. They may not be able to get a second job—many are running between different jobs, and we see that again in our pastoral work, that people are running from one job to the next. They don't have time to parent their children, look after their parents or be active in the community. But if they were to get equal pay for the job they have, this would put less pressure on them to search for a second job to pay the bills. So that's one important element.

The ability to have barriers from unionization removed so that they will then have the tools to negotiate better, more effective terms of employment would be a

tremendous support for precarious workers. In our faith, we have an obligation to give “tzedakah.” That is generally considered to be charity. But the best form of charity is to give people the tools to become self-sufficient. Raising employment standards and especially removing barriers to unionization will give precarious workers the tools to be able to look after themselves.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you so much.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Marcia and Rabbi Shalom. You referenced the city of Toronto’s resolution. You heard the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which seemed very negative toward this bill; I didn’t hear anything positive. Why have so few municipalities followed Toronto’s lead and endorsed the principles of improving working conditions and increasing the minimum wage? Why have all the other municipalities across Ontario been silent on this?

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: Well, with respect, member Colle, I’m not so sure that so few municipalities have adopted. I know that in Hamilton, I know that in other communities, there have been expressions of support of city council. They may not have gotten the media attention, they may not have forwarded those resolutions to the Legislature, but I’m made aware that local communities have brought their concerns to their local city councils and in many cases have gotten support.

Municipalities that are administering social assistance and other kinds of community supports to precarious workers, to the working poor, know that this legislation is going to not only help the working poor, it’s going to help the municipalities themselves.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, and I think that’s the—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you.

I would just remind committee members that before you speak, you need to be acknowledged by the Chair.

Mr. Mike Colle: Sorry, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. MPP Barrett.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, ISARC, for testifying again. Society really owes so much to churches and other faith communities that do so much for those in precarious positions, as you mentioned, and the most vulnerable in our society. Regrettably—and we hear this so much not only in testimony; as an MPP, I hear this in my riding—the most vulnerable, those with disabilities, for example, as a result of this legislation, are going to be the first to be laid off.

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: Well, again, I think that if there is easier access to unionization, then they will be able to negotiate job security on the basis of seniority so that those who are disabled will not be singled out, and if they are, they will be able to have union representation to challenge their discrimination.

It is true, though, that the not-for-profit sector is going to have funding challenges, at least in the short term. The funding that they get from the province, whether directly or indirectly, is based on current cost structures. There is going to be a need for the province, even before the next renewal of those service contracts, to revisit the funding

so that not-for-profit agencies will be in a position to meet the costs.

0940

I know that there is, for example, currently a strike of community college teachers. The funding that the province has given to the colleges, while it has increased over the years, and that’s wonderful—because this law, if it’s properly implemented, is going to put additional obligations on these publicly funded employers, there needs to be some additional financial support so that they can—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just to go back to, for example, people with disabilities, I had a call recently from a person whose son has a brain injury. He’s in a home and, fortunately, he does work at minimum wage, but he’s going to be laid off. The other young people in this home are not going to be laid off. These people will not be allowed into a union, basically; that’s the understanding in my area. They live in a group home. These are the people that we’re very concerned about.

We hear testimony here—Tim Hortons, for example, hires from those social service agencies, and they’re going to stop doing that.

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: Well, I think that if there is evidence that that is happening, that is discrimination and that is already covered by the Human Rights Code. If there is something in the bill that would prevent people who have disabilities from participating in unionization campaigns—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it’s the \$15 that will prevent them—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you very much for your presentation, Rabbi. I’ll just remind you that if you have a further submission, it needs to be to the Clerk of the Committee by 5 p.m. on Friday, November 3.

Rabbi Shalom Schachter: Thank you very much.

WORKERS’ ACTION CENTRE

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Our next presenter: the Workers’ Action Centre. When you get settled, please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard and your five-minute presentation will begin.

Ms. Deena Ladd: Good morning. My name is Deena Ladd and I’m with the Workers’ Action Centre, here presenting today.

We very much support many aspects of Bill 148. We work on the front lines in our communities with workers who are non-unionized. In that work, I need to make it very clear to all of the committee members that it’s really important that—this legislation has sort of come about because of the fact that so many workers in our province, six million, rely on employment standards. They do not have collective agreements. What is in this legislation is what they rely on in terms of protecting them at work.

We need to make sure that the Employment Standards Act is the strongest it can be, and that it actually gives workers confidence when they go to work that they will be protected. We believe that Bill 148 has a lot of

measures that will help strengthen the floor of protection that workers have. But I think it's also really incredibly important that we be clear that we need to ensure that for any amendments that get made or any legislative changes that are made to employment standards, the costs are not borne by workers for businesses.

In my comments, I want to focus on temp agency work, because I think that when we're looking at precarious employment, this is one of the biggest areas of work that is also creating vulnerable and precarious types of working conditions. We believe that this legislation should be working to limit the use of temp agencies to exceptional circumstances in terms of what it should have been used for before—so short-term replacement but not to replace full-time work.

We need to expand regulation by requiring that assignment workers—workers who are working through temp agencies—be converted to employees of the client company after three months, and that the proportion of assignment workers should be kept at 20% so that we do not have the kinds of situations that we hear of in the media on a daily basis where massive amounts of workers are basically used through temp agencies for years and years and years, instead of being made permanent workers. We need to make sure that client companies are held liable for accidents and illnesses of temp agency workers.

Bill 148 takes two steps to better protect temp agency workers from inequality of wages and insecurity of work, but amendments are needed. The equal-pay-for-temp-agency-workers provision in Bill 148 must be amended to ensure that the temp agency workers can access equal pay, and also, the termination-of-assignments provision in Bill 148 must be amended to close the gap.

I want to just briefly talk about the issue of termination because I think that there are unintended consequences here that undermine the government's intent of trying to make sure that temp agency workers actually get termination pay. We believe that it's important that workers get termination pay but don't end up getting the unintended consequence of having their assignments finished before three months. Right now, to be eligible for termination notice or pay in lieu of notice, in the bill, the assignment must have an estimated term of three months or more at the time it was offered to the employee. The consequence of this language is that temporary help agencies will adopt employment practices that ensure that assignments are for less than three months or are open-ended assignments without fixed end dates to avoid their liability. Either workers will face a new assignment with their client employer every three months or they will lose their assignment prior to reaching three months of work with the client company. The unintentional consequence is that there will be more precarious employment and income insecurity for temp agency workers, not less.

The new termination-of-assignment provision limits temp agency workers to only one week of notice or pay in lieu of notice regardless of how long the workers have

been employed on assignments. That is contrary to what is in the ESA. If a temporary agency worker has been on an assignment for two years, for instance, they should be eligible for two weeks of termination pay, like regular workers. We should not have any provisions that would provide lesser rights. That is an unintended consequence here.

The other issue that I want to talk about is that we really support bringing equality in pay to temp agency workers, but we need amendments to ensure real protection—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We'll move to the government for the first round of questioning. MPP Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair. Deena, it's good to see you. Please finish the point that you tried to make.

Ms. Deena Ladd: Oh, okay. Basically, we were just saying that in terms of all workers being able to access the provisions of equal pay for equal work that are in the legislation, we believe that there are four major problems: the scope of work that is comparable for equal pay, employer exceptions to complying with equal pay, the definition of seniority on the basis of accumulated hours of work, and the enforcement of equal pay. These four areas are outlined in much detail in our brief that was presented yesterday. Those are the things that we need to ensure are fixed so that we actually get the full intent of what the government is proposing to do, which I think is really fantastic, which is trying to make sure that precarious workers are not being used to undermine permanent work.

Mr. Han Dong: You know that my Conservative colleagues have voted against this bill in the House. They have indicated that they may do that again after this process is done. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Deena Ladd: Well, I think that this whole process of doing the Changing Workplaces Review and reviewing precarious employment has been taking into account the fact that we have not seen any substantial legislative changes to tackle the rise of precarious work over the last 20 years. The time is now. I don't think any political party wants to be connected to legislation that was created after the Second World War and to be seen as out of touch with workers in their communities. By not supporting the legislation, by not actually looking at the evidence that has been presented on the massive amounts of part-time work, temp agency work, and low wages that have been expanding so rapidly in so many of our communities—this is why this legislation has so much support across the province. I would assume that no political party wants to be seen as not actually dealing with poverty and the kinds of brutal, precarious working conditions that are happening, where workers cannot support their families. So it's surprising to me.

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Mr. Han Dong: Yes, I know. It's all about fairness.

You've had a lively debate with the CFIB, I know, in the past. Do you want to use this platform to tell us some of your points or highlights in that debate?

Ms. Deena Ladd: I think it's well-documented, again, that we have one of the highest percentages of minimum wage workers across the country in this province—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We'll move to the official opposition. MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Deena, for joining us this morning.

I'm glad that Mr. Dong could update you on the status of voting on the bill. The reality is, they have a majority. Whatever bill passes will be the bill that they decide passes. So if they decide not to put in protection for temporary workers, that'll be totally up to them. If they decide to put it in, it'll be up to them. They have the majority. We did vote against the bill because of some of the provisions in it. We want to see an economic impact analysis that has yet to be done by the government.

On the issue of temporary workers, I think you've raised some very excellent points. Do you actually have circumstances where people have been a client, basically working for a temp agency for two years and have been assigned to a workplace for a length of time as long as two years?

Ms. Deena Ladd: Absolutely. During the Changing Workplaces Review, a member of our centre, Angel Reyes, was working for five years for Canada Fibers as a temp agency worker and was—

Mr. John Yakabuski: So employed by the temp agency and assigned to the company?

Ms. Deena Ladd: Yes—for five years consistently, and was not hired permanently. He lost his job when he spoke out about wanting to be hired permanently, which is why we believe it's really quite critical that temporary agency workers, if they are coming in for a summer vacation or maternity leave—then that is originally what they were intended for, not to replace full-time permanent workers on an ongoing basis.

I think the equal pay provisions could in fact deal with the issue around keeping temp agency workers at minimum wage with no benefits. If it is actually strong legislation in the bill—I think it would be amazing because what we would then have is no ability for a company to bring in temp agency workers or part-time workers or casual workers, keep them on for indefinite periods of time and decide that they're going to pay them 40% less and keep them as a second-class worker.

We would love to have your support on that and the other amendments that we are putting forward to ensure that this legislation actually protects workers.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So you want to see some limitations as to how a temp—there is a need for temporary workers because the workplace is of that nature. You want to see some limitations on how they can be used and the conditions in which they can be used?

Ms. Deena Ladd: We would like workers to be converted into full-time workers after three months. We would like there to be a cap of 20% in a workplace, so that no more than 20% of workers can be used through temp agencies. Those would be two provisions, in addition to ensuring that there is strong language on equal

pay. We would also like the client company to be held completely liable for accidents.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We'll move to MPP Forster.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Hi, Deena. Thanks for being here today.

The NDP proposed a number of amendments at second reading. The government actually didn't support any of those amendments.

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We'll be proposing those amendments again—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): MPP Yakabuski—

Ms. Cindy Forster: You're eating into my time.

The NDP will be proposing those amendments as well, which will address some of the concerns you raise today.

I have a private member's bill on Thursday which would see a standard minimum wage for all in the province of Ontario. Can you comment on the impact of having a \$15 minimum wage for every worker in this province?

Ms. Deena Ladd: I think that we obviously have been very much in favour of a minimum wage that brings workers out of poverty. A \$15 minimum wage brings everyone 10% above the poverty line, the low-income measure in this province.

We believe also that there should not be any exemptions and that all workers should have access to the minimum wage. Obviously, Ontario is the only province that has a differential student minimum wage, and that should be gone. As well, agricultural workers and many of the workers that are in low-wage work should have access to the minimum wage.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Now, I understand that there are still consultations going on with respect to the agriculture sector. Have you been involved in any of those consultations?

Ms. Deena Ladd: Not necessarily, but a centre that deals with all types of workers in precarious work, including migrant work, we want this legislation to be the best it can be and we support the direction that this legislation is going in. I think that it has a real, incredible chance to strengthen our protections and strengthen the legislative ability for workers to be able to mitigate the precariousness of work that they're facing in their workplace.

There's a lot of support out there for trying to get decent work into the workplaces, so why not make this bill the strongest it can be and ensure that every worker, regardless of the sector they're in, their age or the type of work they're doing, has at least a strong floor of protection with no gaps and loopholes?

You need to ensure that when this legislation comes into being—when we, as front-line advocates, are out there, making sure that workers, then, who complain can

come forward, can actually use the legislation with its full protection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We have a lot of workers in this province who currently are in precarious work, and the end goal is to make sure that the legislation is black and white and there are not loopholes.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you very much.

Ms. Deena Ladd: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The deadline to send in a written submission to the Clerk of the Committee is 5 p.m. on Friday, November 3.

Ms. Deena Ladd: Okay. Thank you so much.

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I'm calling our next and final presenter this morning, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

When you get settled, please identify yourself for Hansard, and you may begin your five-minute presentation.

Mr. Plamen Petkov: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everyone. My name is Plamen Petkov. I'm the Ontario vice-president at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB. I am here with my colleague Julie Kwiecinski, who is the Ontario director at the federation.

Thank you very much for your time today. We appreciate the opportunity to present to you on Bill 148.

As most of you are aware, CFIB is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization. We represent small and medium-sized businesses across Canada. We have 109,000 members across the country; 42,000 of those are here in the province of Ontario. All of our members are independently owned Canadian businesses. They set our position on any policy issue that we take on, and we are entirely funded through our membership. We don't take any government funding, and we don't get funding from any other sources.

We are here today to express our members' very strong concern and very strong opposition to Bill 148. There are a few reasons for this position. First, small businesses are very worried that the government did not conduct any consultation on the \$15 minimum wage before making the announcement. There was no economic analysis done to determine the impact of these drastic changes that this legislation is proposing. The Premier herself acknowledged that the increase to the minimum wage is unprecedented; no other jurisdiction has gone this high in such a short period of time.

I wanted to direct your attention to a couple of points. In front of you, you have our latest member survey. As you probably know, 98% of all businesses in the province are small and medium-sized businesses. Based on the survey, what we found out is that 86% of employees who work in small and medium-sized businesses right now make above the minimum wage; 63% earn at least \$15 an hour.

What we are most worried about, from a small-business perspective, is what we call "wage compression." Right now, wage levels that are \$15, \$16, \$17 an hour are considered to be good wages. You can imagine the pressure this legislation is going to place on employers when they have to attend to the requests from their employees asking for a raise—because somebody who right now is making \$4 or \$5 or \$6 an hour more than the minimum wage is then going to be making close to the minimum wage.

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With that, I'll turn it over to Julie to outline some of the other impacts of this legislation.

Ms. Julie Kwiecinski: Good morning, committee members. My name is Julie Kwiecinski. I'm the director of provincial affairs for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Taking off from Plamen's comments, businesses that survive the \$15 minimum wage plan, if they are still in Ontario, will have had to make some serious, hard decisions to adapt.

If you look at page 1 of the survey—in the interests of time, I'll just identify a few numbers. This isn't me talking; it's what 42,000 CFIB members in the province of Ontario have told us:

- 66.1% of them have told us they will increase their prices because of the \$15 minimum wage plan;
- 64.5% said they will reduce hiring;
- 52.9% will cut employee hours; and
- 43.2% will reduce staff.

You'll see there's a whole slew of other figures, including "Consider selling, closing or moving my business outside of Ontario"—a whopping 34.2%. It's sad to be considering that before the bill is even passed. It's very telling.

Plamen already identified that government has not done its homework. Our members have asked us: "Why is the government not listening? Why are they focusing only on information that supports their own position?" Government has chosen to dismiss and trivialize very important job studies. I'm just going to point to one because it's by the independent officer of the Legislative Assembly known as the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario. That report showed a net loss of 50,000 jobs. This is real jobs; this isn't 50,000 opportunities. The number was 65,000, but when you take into account—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We will begin questioning with the official opposition. MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you for joining us today.

Your numbers are quite stark. We're already seeing examples. There's a little restaurant across the road from my apartment. He told me not that long ago that he didn't know if he would survive when the law was passed. I said, "The Liberals have the majority. It will pass." This morning, when I was at the gym looking out the window, there was a "for lease" sign in the window of what was his restaurant. He didn't wait. He shut it down. This is

what we're hearing, and this is what I hear around my riding. I'm sure you're hearing it across the province of Ontario.

You're talking about the effect of the \$15 an hour. We're all in agreement that wages need to rise. The cost of living in Ontario has gone crazy under this government. But the timetable has to be one that—those people who are going to be forced to pay it have to be able to absorb it, or people are going to lose jobs. Even the New Democrats in British Columbia have said they're going to slow it down and implement it by 2021.

Was there any consultation on this issue at all with you people?

Ms. Julie Kwiecinski: There was no consultation whatsoever on the \$15 minimum wage. It was outside of the scope and the mandate of the Changing Workplaces Review.

What we're hearing from our members is, where is the government's skin in the game? Businesses are being asked to foot the bill. We have some ideas, but because there was no consultation, we haven't had a viable discussion on how to better help low-wage earners. What about raising the personal income tax exemption threshold, which in Ontario is now at \$10,171? In Alberta, it's at \$18,690. Where is the government's skin in the game to help low-wage earners?

Mr. John Yakabuski: They want to have a social program, but they want businesses to foot the entire cost of it.

Ms. Julie Kwiecinski: Somebody else to pay for it.

I'd like to make one other point, if you don't mind, because I didn't get to it earlier. We can do much better in this province to help low-wage earners.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Could you sit back just a bit, please?

Ms. Julie Kwiecinski: Oh, certainly. I seem to be more comfortable leaning in.

We can do much better. Government can do much better to help low-wage earners by supporting them in moving up to better-paying jobs instead of creating policies that keep people at this lower level, at the high-risk jobs that—the FAO said himself, when payroll costs go up, which jobs go? Inexperienced workers.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): We'll move to the third party. MPP Forster.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you very much for being here today.

Now, you talked about some of the other things that the government could do—if you just want to take a couple of minutes to expand on that. The first one you raised was reducing the personal income tax rates for low-income earners.

Mr. Plamen Petkov: Thank you for that. The point here is that our members are not objecting to the intentions of what this bill is trying to accomplish. I think it's very important that we support low-income earners. In fact, it is actually small and medium-sized businesses

that are doing their fair share. Usually they provide the first job to a young person. They provide the first job to a new immigrant in the country. Those who can afford it already pay higher than the minimum wage. That's very evident in our survey.

What we are saying here is that increasing the minimum wage so drastically is a very blunt instrument. There are other ways that the government can look at to do that. Increasing the personal income tax exemption helps to not tax people who make minimum wage. If we are truly trying as a province and as a society to help low-income earners, why are we taxing them?

Ms. Cindy Forster: So you support the \$15 minimum wage.

Mr. Plamen Petkov: No, we do not, and that is very clear in our survey. Two reasons for that: Why is it \$15 an hour? Where is that number coming from? There hasn't been any consultation; there hasn't been any analysis. And why within that time frame?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I can tell you, having travelled the province over the summer, that almost every community that we were in—and we met with poverty activists, we met with community social services departments and we met with medical officers of health who were all part of determining what the living wage was in those communities. It ranged from a low, of the ones that I heard, of about \$14.80 to a high of \$18.50, depending on the community that you actually lived in. These are real people living that reality in their communities.

I think that there has been a lot of local community work done in terms of dollars and what people actually need to survive in their community, taking into account the rents, the cost of food, the cost—and I think most of those studies didn't even include child care, which is exorbitant for many people trying to exist on a minimum wage. I don't think that the figure was pulled out of the air. There has been a lot of work done on this over the past couple of years.

Mr. Plamen Petkov: No, I understand that. As you said, those consultations took place in the summer, after the government had already announced this plan. That is the troublesome point. We would have appreciated having this debate, this discussion, in advance.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. We move to the government. MPP Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: Welcome back, Julie. It's good to see you again.

Ms. Julie Kwiecinski: It's good to see you too.

Mr. Mike Colle: Plamen, thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Plamen Petkov: Thank you.

Mr. Mike Colle: You have a survey here that says, "How can the Ontario government best help improve the standard of living for low-income earners?" Select—a whole list, like reduce provincial taxes, increase provincial basic personal, invest in skills training. That's what your members responded. But not one member seemed to respond, "Maybe increase wages." How is that possible?

Mr. Plamen Petkov: Well, these are alternatives to increasing the minimum wage. What we're trying to say here is—

Mr. Mike Colle: I see. So that's—

Mr. Plamen Petkov: In addition to a discussion on minimum wage, what else is there as policy levers for the government to use; right? That is the point that we are trying to make here. Yes, you're going to go out there and you're going to find some businesses that are supportive of a \$15 minimum wage. Those businesses are doing well. They are not going to wait for the government to pass legislation so that they pay higher wages. They are already doing that. They know that this is a competitive advantage.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, and I think you've made that point clear. What you're more worried about is compression—

Mr. Plamen Petkov: Absolutely.

Mr. Mike Colle: No, because here it doesn't say about alternatives to minimum wage; it just says, "How can the Ontario government best help improve the standard of living?" We're saying that we've put in new controls on rent increases. We're doing OHIP+, where there are free drugs right across the board every year up to 25. Free tuition, we're doing. Okay, now, but what came back to us—because we did a two-year consultation on the workplace review.

Mr. Plamen Petkov: Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Mike Colle: Over and over again, the people who were concerned about the standard of living of workers—

these are working people, as you know. They want to work in small business. They don't want a handout; they want to work. They kept on saying, "You can do all these labour reforms. The big elephant in the room is trying to feed a family on \$11 an hour. You can't do it." They kept on saying, "You've got to do more than labour reforms. You've got to increase people's wages because the real wages, actually, are back to 1975 levels with inflation." They're regressing, as you know.

I think Julie mentioned that we trivialized the reports. We didn't. Yesterday there was a very good economist hired by the chamber of commerce. I said to him, "I agree that you are a legitimate economist," but the thing that he agreed on too is that there is growing income inequality in this country and province. This is one of the ways of dealing with that growing gap between people who can do—God bless them—very well, and the people who work two or three jobs who can't pay the rent or are living five in a room, so—

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you.

Ms. Julie Kwiecinski: Can we comment on that?

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): No, sorry. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Plamen Petkov: Thank you for having us.

The Chair (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The deadline to send another written submission to the Clerk of the Committee is 5 p.m. on Friday, November 3.

Committee members, we are going to adjourn until Thursday at 9 a.m. in room 151. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1012.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

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Ms. Ann Hoggarth (Barrie L)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Han Dong (Trinity–Spadina L)

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre L)

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk PC)

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence L)

Mr. Han Dong (Trinity–Spadina L)

Mr. Victor Fedeli (Nipissing PC)

Ms. Ann Hoggarth (Barrie L)

Ms. Harinder Malhi (Brampton–Springdale L)

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