

Province Passes Legislation to Increase Minimum Wage

Ontario Strengthening Protections for Vulnerable Workers

NEWS

November 6, 2014

Today, Bill 18, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2014, passed third reading with all party support in the Ontario legislature.

The new act supports Ontario's [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), and is designed to further increase protections for vulnerable workers. The act will help workers by:

- Tying future minimum wage increases to the Consumer Price Index for Ontario which will be announced by April of each year, and come into effect on Oct.1
- Ensuring Occupational Health and Safety Act coverage for unpaid co-op students and other unpaid learners , which will give them protection under the OHSa such as the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to refuse unsafe work
- Eliminating the \$10,000 cap on the recovery of unpaid wages through Ministry of Labour orders to pay and increasing the period of recovery to two years
- Expanding employment protections to cover all foreign employees who come to Ontario under an immigration or foreign temporary employee program
- Holding temporary help agencies and their employer clients accountable for certain employment standards violations, such as failure to pay regular wages, overtime pay, and public holiday entitlements.

Protecting vulnerable workers and making the minimum wage fair is part of the government's economic plan for Ontario. The four-part plan is building Ontario up by investing in people's talents and skills, building new public infrastructure like roads and transit, creating a dynamic, supportive environment where business thrives, and building a secure savings plan so everyone can afford to retire.

QUOTES

"Taking the politics out of setting the minimum wage provides fairness for workers and predictability for businesses. This legislation will also protect the most vulnerable workers and level the playing field for employers who play by the rules. These are the right steps to take; they will make Ontario a better place to work and run a business."

— Kevin Flynn, Minister of Labour

"Our government's renewed, refocused effort to reduce poverty — Realizing Our Potential — is built around and rooted in the determination of people struggling with poverty, those who are trying to get ahead and fully participate in the communities and the province they call home. I'm proud of our government's record on raising the minimum wage and continuing to transform social assistance too as we work to lift Ontarians out of poverty and maintain an effective social safety net for those in need."

— Deb Matthews, Deputy Premier, President of the Treasury Board and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy

"Bill 18 is an important move by the Government of Ontario to protect vulnerable workers. It comes at a significant time. Research shows that almost half of all jobs in our region are now precarious: part time, temporary, or contract work. Better protection for these workers will make people and their families more stable and secure - and will promote greater economic stability for all Ontarians."

-Susan McIsaac, President and CEO, United Way Toronto

QUICK FACTS

- The act builds on the 2014 increase to minimum wage from \$10.25 to \$11 per hour.
- The original version of the bill was introduced nearly a full year ago, in December 2013.
- This new legislation acts on the recommendations of Ontario's Minimum Wage Advisory Panel, which included business, labour, youth and anti-poverty representatives.
- The number of temporary foreign workers in Ontario has risen from 91,000 in 2008 to 133,000 in 2013.
- Ontario joins other provinces and territories that have set longer time limits for the recovery of wages, allowing workers more time to get the wages they are rightfully owed.
- The new legislation builds on work reflected in recent reports such as the United Way/McMaster University "It's More Than Poverty" report prepared by the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario research group and the "Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work" report by the Law Commission of Ontario.

LEARN MORE

Know your rights under [Ontario's Employment Standards Act, 2000](#).

Review the [Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act](#).

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