

Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination
Hosted by: Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health
160 Chancellors Way
Guelph ON N1E 0E1

RE: Bill 148: Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017

Attn: Mr. Eric Rennie
Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Queen's Park, Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

To the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs:

The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination works collaboratively, informed by diverse voices of experience, to take local action and advocate for system and policy change to address the root causes of poverty. The Poverty Task Force (PTF) recognizes that income inequality is a critical priority and believes that everyone should have the income, resources and opportunities to fully participate in the community.¹

The PTF supports the proposed changes in Bill 148 to the *Employment Standards Act (ESA)* and *Labour Relations Act (LRA)*, including increasing the minimum wage, ensuring part-time workers are paid the same hourly wage as full-time workers, and introducing measures to protect contract service workers.

As a provincial leader in the living wage movement, the PTF has been deeply engaged in discussions with local employers about the importance of paying wages that can lift families and individuals out of poverty. We've heard the arguments that raising wages will destroy jobs and increase the price of goods and services. We stand with leading Canadian economists that suggest this is "fear mongering that is out of line with the latest economic research."² The success and growth of living wage employers from every sector, including small businesses, have demonstrated that these arguments are simply untrue. We know there is no correlation between minimum wage increases and employment levels.³ While the PTF will continue to support employers who are interested in paying a living wage, we also strongly support a \$15 legislated minimum wage.

¹ Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination (2014). *Strategic Plan*. Available online: <http://www.gwpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/2014-Strategic-Plan1.pdf>

² *Open Letter from Canadian Economists in Support of \$15 in Ontario* (2017). Available online: <http://www.progressive-economics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/EconomistsSupport15inOntario.pdf>

³ Sonn, P.K. and Y. Lathrop (2016). *Raise Wages, Kill Jobs? Seven Decades of Historical Data Find No Correlation Between Minimum Wage Increases and Employment Levels*. Available online: <http://www.nelp.org/publication/raise-wages-kill-jobs-no-correlation-minimum-wage-increases-employment-levels/>

The proposed changes in Bill 148 demonstrate the Government of Ontario's commitment to address social and economic concerns regarding vulnerable employees in precarious employment. We encourage the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to maintain this pledge by ensuring that evidence, including the voices of those impacted by precarious work and low wages, continues to move the Bill forward.

Sincerely,



Raechelle Devereaux
PTF Co-Chair



Helen Fisburn
PTF Co-Chair