

Ontario's Labour Reform

A Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force Update, 2018

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force will always support employment situations that are fair, secure, safe, and provide employees with a living wage. These are minimum standards necessary in the elimination of poverty.

As changes made to Ontario's Employment Standards and Labour Relations Acts come into place, it is important to reflect how these changes will impact those affected by poverty locally.



30% employed Ontarians in non-Metro Census Divisions are paid a low-wage*

* Low wage = 1.5x minimum wage; within non-Metro Census Divisions†

What has changed?



Minimum wage increase to \$14 per hour - 01/01/2018



Minimum wage increase to \$15 per hour - 01/01/2019



Equal pay for equal work



Updated regulations around shift scheduling



Card-based voting for unionization



Hiring additional employment standards officers



3 hours pay for shifts cut to <3 hours or cancelled <48 hours in advance



10 emergency leave days, including 2 paid sick days per year

What does this mean?

More than a million of Ontario's lowest wage employees received a big raise, the most significant in almost 50 years.

Flexibility & stability through advance notice of scheduling and paid sick time will be afforded to all workers.

Quality of life, in the form of health and family outcomes, improves with higher income and decreased employment precarity.

Keeping money local. When the lowest wage workers earn extra income, they are able to spend money on necessities within their own communities. They are able to buy more and better groceries, warm clothes for their children, and keep up with bills.

What's the downside?

We have heard from people with low-incomes, as well as from service providers that work closely with marginalized populations that they are concerned about possible negative impacts. They are anticipating lay-offs, increases in 'under the table' hiring, and fewer jobs overall.

Some employers have already reduced or eliminated other non-mandated perks previously offered to employees.

How does the Poverty Task Force respond?

It's already happening.	Most of these changes took effect January 1, 2018.
With challenges come new opportunities.	As always, we will apply creative solutions within our respective organizations to overcome any unintended negative impacts.
Mixed Evidence.	While those for, against, and ambivalent to these changes can all cite evidence that supports their perspective, the Poverty Task Force is of the view that these changes will be beneficial overall. It will be important to measure actual outcomes closely.
Our work is not done.	We continue to monitor the impacts locally and will always advocate with and for lower income and precarious workers. Beyond this, we also believe in income security for those outside of the labour force, and support the concept of a Basic Income Guarantee as a means to meet the needs of all Ontarians.

† A* Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)... is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core)* and "must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live on the core based on the previous Census of Population Program." Non-CMAs are remains census divisions that do not meet these criteria.
Sources: <http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/uploads/userfiles/files/Non-metro%20trends%20in%20low%20wage%20work%20Vol%204%20No%206.pdf>
http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=4963