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July 8, 2021

Sent Via Email

Hon. Monte McNaughton
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
14th Floor, 900 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

Dear Minister McNaughton,

I am writing in response to your announcement that the Ontario Ministry of Labour will undertake an Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee.

The Committee is tasked with recommending changes to employment and labour law.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees certainly agrees that working people in Ontario are hurting after more than a year of pandemic economic conditions. We were hurting before the pandemic, when the PC government reversed an increase to the minimum wage, allowed employers to pay part-time employees lower wages for the same work, and handed employers numerous tools to flip contracts and bust unions.

We have been hurting since the PC government imposed unconstitutional and immoral wage caps under Bill 124.

Front-line workers have borne the brunt of the pandemic as the PC government repeatedly failed to protect them with proper PPE and adequate sick leave.

To working people, it is no mystery what steps can be taken to achieve “workforce recovery.” Unfortunately, it does not appear your committee will be speaking to any of them.

Not long ago, this province underwent a years-long consultation process with an identical mandate: to recommend changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*.

CUPE Ontario did not agree with all the recommendations that came from that process, which culminated in the 2017 *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*. But there were important and helpful improvements to provincial working conditions, and they came after real and sustained consultation with all parties concerned, including workers and their unions.

In contrast, the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee is comprised solely of business owners, managers and management lawyers, with no representatives from trade unions, worker advocacy groups, or labour-side law firms. And it is set to release its recommendations in less than one month.

Fred Hahn
President

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Candace Rennick
Secretary-Treasurer

This raises questions about whether these conditions were set up deliberately to assure a preordained outcome, and one that the government already assumes will anger workers and their unions. If this is the case, then it is incumbent on us to publicly criticize and mobilize against such a flawed process.

If it is not the case---if you intend to allow meaningful consultation and have an open mind about how to reform employment and labour law---then we urge you to immediately pause the Committee's work, restructure its membership to include worker representation, and reform its timeline.

I hope you will consider changing course on this matter, and I am available at any time to discuss our position further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred Hahn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fred Hahn
President

COPE343