



December 4, 2018

Dear President Fearon,

In 2017, the Government of Ontario passed legislation to expand minimum protections for workers across the province. Under the newly elected Progressive Conservative (PC) government, these slight improvements to the Employment Standards Act were repealed under Bill 47. CUPE 4207 stands with others on campus and across the province in being opposed to the sustained push by both the Ontario Progressive Conservatives and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) to have Bill 148 repealed. Further, we are disappointed not only with the passing of Bill 47, but that Brock University continues to remain a member of the OCC.

The changes introduced in Bill 148 were the culmination of years' worth of demands to repair the flaws in the Employment Standards Act which have compromised the rights of some of the most vulnerable workers. These proposals originated from a lengthy process of research and consultations, of which the majority consistently demanded strengthening - rather than weakening - legislation. Consistently in the minority in this process, the OCC stood in stark contrast to the majority.

Some of these changes include:

- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by January 2019. As statistics over the last year have demonstrated, increasing the minimum wage tends to lead to increased economic activity and subsequent growth in employment. The claims of inflation and job losses that the OCC have warned have not materialized in Ontario. Likewise, experiences in other jurisdictions around the world have also demonstrated that the fears of mass unemployment and runaway inflation are unfounded.
- Equal pay for equal work. People who do the same work should be paid equally, whether they are part-time, full-time, or contracted work. Given that a significant portion of minimum wage workers are young workers who work part-time, freezing the scheduled wage increase would harm students at Brock University.
- Expansion of vacation to three weeks after five years with the same employer. As research would demonstrate - and some of this conducted by academics at Brock University - increasing vacation time has the impact of improving worker well-being, reducing stress and burnout, and having a positive impact on productivity.
- Fairer scheduling rules on advance notice for shifts and minimum hours paid for cancelled shifts.

- Increase in the number of emergency paid leave and waiving the requirement to produce doctors' notes.
- Increasing the possible fines for violating the ESA.

These changes were welcomed across the province and would improve the rights of the most precariously employed workers. As revealed regularly by the media, by unions, by activists, and by workers, employers violating rights and breaking the ESA often go unpunished given the unequal power relations in employment. Some of these violations have been fatal for workers.

However, despite representing a minority, the positions of the OCC were empowered by the PC Government to dismantle these improvements and set back rights decades for workers in Ontario. These include:

- Forcing workers to provide a doctor's note, despite statements by medical professionals condemning this approach.
- Eliminating equal pay for equal work. The OCC notes that Pay Equity targeting the gendered pay gap is untouched, but neglect to note that women comprise a majority of part-time workers in Ontario.
- Removes protections for temp agency workers and makes it harder to join a union.
- Eliminates requirements for fair scheduling.
- Eliminates the two paid sick days and cancels the minimum wage increase.
- Reduces the penalties for violating the ESA to be even lower than what they were prior to Bill 148's passing.

Despite widespread outrage across the province, the PCs privileged the pro-business agenda of the OCC and forced through changes that would weaken rights for the most vulnerable. If Brock University claims to be among the top employers in Hamilton-Niagara, it needs to clarify whether it supports weakening minimum protections for workers in this province. What part did the Administration of Brock play in framing the OCC's demands?

CUPE 4207 calls on Brock University to denounce the changes brought by Bill 47 to the Employment Standards Act, and to cease membership in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

CUPE 4207 Executive

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