

Small business keeping an eye on Bill 148 hearings

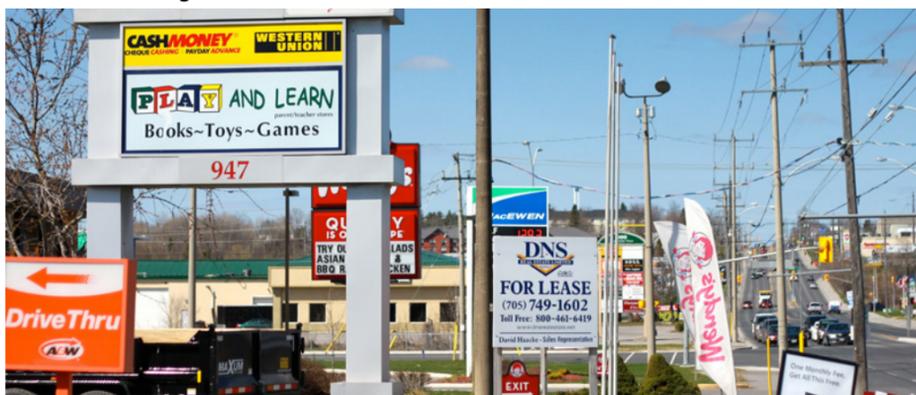
By: Sandra Dueck, Policy Analyst, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

The hearings on Bill 148 Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act started this week. Monday saw the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in Thunder Bay. Today, the committee will be in Kingston. Several Peterborough groups will be presenting, along with our Chamber counterparts at the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce.

Earlier this week we supported a letter to the Premier from the Keep Ontario Working Coalition, which includes the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and 12 other business groups and associations. Our Peterborough Chamber message to the Committee echoes that of the letter and the concern of our members, 93% of whom are small business. It's simply that the changes contained in the proposed legislation will be difficult to absorb and adjust to in such a short time frame.

"Recently, a roundtable with 24 businesses from all sectors of the Peterborough economy expressed that the changes were too much, too fast," says Stuart Harrison, President & CEO, Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. "Businesses need time to adapt and have told us that without time, they are forecasting fewer hours, fewer new jobs, increased prices and, in some cases, more automation."

As it stands now, Ontario's minimum wage will increase by 32 per cent in only 18 months, with the bulk of



that increase happening in the next six months. This particular element of Bill 148 means businesses will have to absorb between \$30,000 and \$100,000 per year depending on the number of employees.

However, the adjustment to minimum wage, which was not a part of the two year Changing Workplaces Review, is not the only concern. Other pieces of the legislation, such as the 48 hour rule, also bring challenges in industry sectors important to the Peterborough region, such as agriculture and tourism. Broad sweeping rules do not recognize the unique aspects of these industries and the mostly small and medium-sized businesses that operate within them.

Over the past number of weeks there has been great discussion about how the \$15/hour wage is impacting other communities and particularly large cities, such as Seattle, in the United States. However, in comparison to the quick timeline proposed for Ontario, many

of these jurisdictions have been on five year trajectories and even then there is great debate about whether or not the desired outcomes have truly been achieved. For example, the State of California is taking five years to increase their minimum wage by 50 per cent to \$15/hour with employers of less than 25 employees. Seattle has allowed for a 4-year implementation for a 36 per cent wage increase. However, recent evidence by the National Bureau of Economic Research has suggested that the costs of the Seattle minimum wage increases outweigh the benefits by 3:1. In that instance, low-wage workers are losing \$125 per month due to less hours of work scheduled.

"To demonstrate true fairness and compassion for workers, we must ensure Ontario has a strong economy to help create jobs and increase economic growth," said Karl Baldauf, Vice President of Policy and Government Relations at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and Spokesperson for the

Keep Ontario Working Coalition.

Throughout the past two years of the Changing Workplaces Review the Chamber Network called for a balanced approach to change. Achieving that balance includes slowing down the time frame for implementation, and understanding the economic impact of the proposed changes to businesses across sectors, and by size and location (rural/urban).

The Keep Ontario Working Coalition has commissioned an independent economic analysis of the impact of these proposed changes on the economy. The results are expected in August. Sure, we can make some preliminary recommendations around mitigation strategies, but without taking the time to understand all the potential ripple effects of Bill 148 and its quick implementation those strategies may not be as effective as hoped. Being able to look at both sides of the equation is prudent to ensure Ontario's continued competitiveness.

CCC: Please act to clarify duty to consult

More than a year after it was submitted to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, a report by Aboriginal legal expert Bryn Gray on how the Crown could improve its approach to its duty to consult Indigenous peoples has been released. Mr. Gray was commissioned by the previous government to consult with Indigenous peoples as well as industry and federal officials and provide recommendations. His report acknowledges that some progress has been made, but that much still needs to be done.

Building Relationships and Advancing Reconciliation through Meaningful Consultation shares many of the themes of the Canadian

Chamber's September 2016 report Seizing Six Opportunities for More Clarity: the Duty to Consult and Accommodate Process. These include businesses knowing they have an important role to play in consultation regarding their projects but often feeling "caught in the middle" due to unresolved, unrelated issues because the Crown is "missing in action". Another perspective Mr. Gray and the Canadian Chamber share is that the Crown – and business – need to look at engagement of and consultation with Indigenous peoples as more



than boxes to be ticked but as an opportunity to improve relationships amongst themselves and advance reconciliation. We also share the view that capacity building tools for industry, Indigenous peoples and officials need to be improved and that the federal government needs to adopt a whole-of-government approach to consultation including better coordination with the provinces and territories.

STRENGTHENING BUSINESS.

JOIN US

ONE MEMBER AT A TIME.

Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan

FOR FIRMS WITH 1-50 EMPLOYEES

Insurance for small business that's anything but small

contact: Brian Bulger at 741-1400

Darling Insurance helping to "turn things around" in Peterborough

Darling Insurance presented a cheque to CCRC for \$2,500 from funds made available through Gore Mutual Insurance Company.

The purpose of the funding is to build strong, healthy families, which

aligns perfectly with Community Counselling & Resource Centre's mission of helping people strengthen their lives and promoting community well-being.

CCRC exists to help people make positive changes in their lives through services that offer professional counselling, support and resources to assist with personal well-being, credit and

financial management, access to housing and connection with the community.

More: cccr-ptbo.com

Local holistic business expands services

Inner Balance Health Solutions owner Nichole Moffatt is now a Certified BASE allergy consultant and is expanding her scope of offering by adding non-invasive allergy testing and allergy therapy.

More: eathealthy2bpainfree.com

www.peterboroughchamber.ca

The Region's Largest Business Trade Show

LOVE LOCAL EXPO
STRENGTHENING BUSINESS

Love Local Expo

SEPTEMBER 27, 2017

Book Your Booth:
peterboroughchamber.ca

Show Sponsor

GREATER Peterborough Chamber of Commerce

Call for Proposals: Submissions now open!

The Workforce Development Board, a not-for-profit organization based in Peterborough and funded by the Government of Ontario, has released a call for proposals for three upcoming projects.

Related to the Local Employment Planning Council pilot project, which is now in its second year, the projects are focused on:

1. Labour Market Information and Intelligence
2. Agriculture/Agrifoods: Investigating Local Strategies
3. Newcomers to Canada: Investigating and Documenting Employment Activities.

For more information on these opportunities and the bid criteria, visit wdb.ca and click the 'News' heading.

Local Employment Planning Council
Conseil de planification de l'emploi local

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.