

Thursday, November 15, 2018

Attention: Standing Committee on Financial and Economic Affairs

RE: Bill 47

The Peterborough Chamber of Commerce is filing this letter with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs with regard to the proposed changes under Bill 47.

From the beginning of discussions around workplace we have advocated for balance between the responsibilities of employers and employees, changes around income tax, and a longer runway to allow businesses time to adjust to significant change.

The Peterborough Chamber of Commerce represents about 900 members in the City and County of Peterborough who employ around 25,000 people.

A recent survey of our membership was quite revealing.

Regarding the proposed changes to minimum wage, personal emergency leave days and holiday pay there was a general feeling that these changes would be positive for business. In the comments portion, employers expressed staffing challenges with the personal emergency leave plan. Businesses are still feeling the impact of the significant jump in minimum wage. Some were able to absorb the costs and some felt it was the right thing to do. Many expressed employees in higher wage bands were also looking for increases and this created challenges.

Regarding the items being repealed, most felt there would be little impact on their business. However, some respondents struggled with the decision to repeal the equal pay for equal work provision. They indicated that they would strive to keep this in place, even though it would not be legislated. Perhaps there is the opportunity to reconsider this particular piece.

We also asked respondents to offer recommendations to your government; among them were:

1. Offer temporary assistance to small businesses to help them recoup costs associated with the minimum wage hike to \$14.00/hour. In a policy resolution approved by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce Network in May of 2018 we suggest a tax credit to help businesses recoup some of the costs they had with regard to adjusting payroll systems and human resource policies.
2. Recognize that one size does not fit all. Solutions must recognize that the impact on small businesses will be different from larger operations.
3. Consider a review of the Employer Health Tax threshold. It is currently at \$450,000. In the past, an Ontario Chamber policy resolution suggested it should be set at \$500,000.
4. Continue to explore income tax measures for lower income earners.
5. Consider exemptions for industries such as hospitality, agriculture and tourism that have need for flexible scheduling.



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Changing the apprenticeship ratio to 1:1 for all trades is seen by our members as a positive move to encourage more people to get into the trades and provide a clearer pathway to success. This will allow local businesses to potentially bring in more apprentices.

The winding down of the Ontario College of Trades has been met with some mixed feelings amongst our members. While most continually expressed concern about the punitive nature of the college, some recognized that there were some positives, such as the public registry for tradespeople. This was seen as a way to offer consumer comfort in their choice of contractor.

As this winding down moves forward and a new program is built, we look forward to opportunities to further identify areas that did indeed strengthen our trades economy.

The business community appreciates the opportunity to contribute its voice to issues and calls for continued transparency around these opportunities.

The employer community is doing its part to create better jobs and working conditions in the province as it is. Budget 2017 points out that 98% of all new jobs created since the recession have been full time, and 78% have been above average wage for their respective industries. We hope future legislative environments can continue to build on this success.

Sincerely,



Stuart Harrison
President & CEO
Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce



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