



Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Ontario AgriCentre

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August 8, 2017

Hon. Kevin Flynn
Minister of Labour
400 University Avenue, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON
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Dear Minister Flynn,

Recently, Ms. Jackie Fraser, a small business owner from Fergus, Ontario shared a letter that she received from your office in response to her submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding Bill 138, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017. Her concerns were focused on the Bill's proposed increases to the provincial minimum wage and the detrimental impact it will have on her small business.

Your response included the following statement:

"While we know that the vast majority of decent, law-abiding Ontario businesses will be largely unaffected, there are some companies who may find the transition to paying a more livable wage challenging."

We share Ms. Fraser's distaste with the implication that those businesses who express concern over the raise to minimum wage may not be "decent" or "law-abiding". However, we are particularly interested in the fact that you state: "***we know...businesses will be largely unaffected***" (emphasis added). This suggests that the Ministry of Labour has conducted a thorough impact assessment to know that businesses will be largely unaffected.

The overwhelming response from *our* farm business members has been that the speed and magnitude of the proposed changes to the provincial minimum wage rate will drastically impact the farm operations they have invested so much time and effort to build. Given the nature of agricultural production in this province, these business owners know that proposed increase to minimum wage will seriously affect their business. It will result in farmers and other business owners reducing the number of people they can hire and the jobs they can provide, adopting more automation in their production systems, or farmers changing to a less labour-intensive crop ultimately reducing the local food options for Ontarians. This contradicts your statement that businesses will be largely unaffected.

If a thorough impact assessment has been conducted on the effect of the minimum wage increase it is incumbent on the Ministry of Labour to release this information to the Ontario businesses community. If a thorough impact assessment has not been conducted, then you need to clarify the statement.

Given Premier Wynne's dedication to evidence-based decision-making outlined in the Ministers' Mandate Letters, we expect that the evidence will be promptly provided to the Ontario business community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Currie', written in a cursive style.

Keith Currie
President

cc: Hon. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Karl Baldauf, Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Norm Beal, Food and Beverage Ontario
OFA Commodity Organizations