

Leadership candidates would roll back minimum wage: Minister

Ontario workers now know exactly where they stand with Conservatives in this province.

Last week, every single provincial Conservative leadership candidate spoke up and promised they would take money away from Ontario workers by rolling back the \$15 minimum wage.

Christine Elliot says she'd hold off on the increase for 2019.?

Doug Ford and Tanya Granic Allen told workers a flat-out ?nope? to the raise.

And Caroline Mulroney says she'd put the brakes on that much-needed raise for workers, slowing it down to ?a quarter a year.?

Instead of acknowledging the people who are working full time, yet struggling to pay rent, put food on the table or care for their families, they all ganged up to stop the \$15 minimum wage.

But here's what I know as Minister of Labour: this raise simply cannot wait. Now is the time to ensure that all hard working people of Ontario are sharing in our plan to create more fairness and opportunity for everyone. Ontario's economy is doing well ? almost 800,000 jobs have been created since the recession and our growth has been outpacing all of Canada and the G7 nations. But while Ontario's economy is growing, not all families are sharing in the prosperity.

Many people in Ontario are raising families on minimum wage, and too many are still living in poverty, despite working full time. People are worried about falling behind, even as they are working so very hard to get ahead. The Tories simply ignore these hard working people.

That's why our government brought forward necessary changes to address these challenges and create a fair and more secure workplace. Through our plan, the minimum wage will increase to \$15 an hour, part-time workers will earn equal pay to full-time workers doing the same work, and employees will be better able to balance their commitments through fair scheduling, increased vacation and paid sick days.

The entire Conservative caucus voted against all these measures last year, and now every Conservative leadership candidate has promised to cancel the \$15 minimum wage increase. It's clear Conservatives simply don't care about the millions of people working hard to put food on their family's table.

No one working full-time in Ontario should wonder where their next meal is coming from. Our changes mean that many parents who work two or three minimum wage jobs will no longer have to choose between paying rent and feeding their children. With these changes, employees can take time off work to take care of a loved one without fear of losing their job. Life for workers in Ontario is now better. Life for workers in Ontario is now more secure.

As of January 1, minimum wage in Ontario is \$14 an hour. It will rise to \$15 an hour a year from now. Personal emergency leave and paid vacation has been expanded, and those affected by domestic and sexual violence now have 17 weeks of job-protected leave, including five paid days.

Ontario is stronger because of the changes we have made. The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act reflects the values of the people who live and work in this province and we will continue to fight to protect these important gains. In a place as prosperous as Ontario, this is what all workers deserve. It is what's right and it is what's fair.

With a \$15 minimum wage, free pharmacare for everyone under the age of 25, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, and better, more affordable child care, we are making Ontario a fairer, better place to live for everyone. Our government is committed to protecting these values and building a province where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead.

Kevin Flynn

Minister of Labour