

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs

By Chris Ballard, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

Recently, the Province of Ontario took action to create more opportunity and security for workers with a plan for Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs.

These changes will vastly improve everyday life for residents in Newmarket-Aurora and across the province.

Ontario's economy continues to improve. During the past three years, the province's economy has outperformed all G7 countries in terms of real GDP growth. The unemployment rate has continued to drop while exports and business investments increase.

However, many residents in Newmarket-Aurora, and across Ontario, are still struggling to support themselves and families on part-time, contract or minimum wage work ? it is something that I hear daily at my constituency office.

Your government has a responsibility to address the precarious employment that some residents face and to ensure Ontario workers are protected by updating the province's labour and employment laws and that is what they are doing with the new proposed legislation.

Premier Kathleen Wynne announced that the government is moving forward with a landmark package of measures, including hiking the minimum wage. The changes will see Ontario raising the minimum wage to \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018, and then to \$15 on January 1, 2019, followed by annual increases at the rate of inflation. There will also changes that mandate that part-time, temporary, casual and seasonal employees doing the same job as full-time employees must be paid equally.

This also includes equal pay for temporary help agency employees doing the same job as permanent employees at the agencies' client companies.

Other proposed changes include expanding personal emergency leave to include an across-the-board minimum of at least two paid days per year for all workers, introducing paid sick days for every worker and stepping up enforcement of employment laws bringing Ontario's vacation time into line with the national average by ensuring at least three weeks' vacation after five years with a company, making employee scheduling fairer and requiring employees to be paid for three hours of work if their shift is cancelled within 48 hours of its scheduled start time.

These new changes will positively affect the lives of so many residents in Newmarket-Aurora and is part of the government's plan to build Ontario up.

PTSD Awareness Month

June is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) month.

Evidence shows that first responders such as police, firefighters and paramedics are at least twice as likely as the general population to suffer from PTSD, due to their routine exposure to traumatic stressors.

To honour the amazing first responders in Newmarket-Aurora and to recognize PTSD month, we were joined by Minister Kevin Flynn, Ontario's Minister of Labour, at an Aurora fire hall to meet the men and women who serve our community.

To help combat PTSD and get first responders the support they need, the province of Ontario has implemented a strategy to help prevent or mitigate the risk of PTSD among first responders. They include the creation of a radio and digital campaign aimed at increasing awareness, an annual leadership summit to be hosted by the Minister of Labour to highlight best practices, recognize leaders, and monitor progress in dealing with PTSD, a free online toolkit with resources on PTSD tailored to meet the needs of employers and each of the first responder sectors and grants for research that supports the prevention of PTSD.

As a community, we are so grateful for our first responders ? they run toward danger while we run away from it. We are all thankful to their families for supporting them while they are protecting our community.

An important message from the day's event is for all the family members of First Responders ? remember that your loved one may come home and not seem like themselves. Never be afraid to reach out and ask your loved one if they need help and if they could use some support. Tell your loved on you want to listen, even if they don't feel like talking, let them know that you are there to support them. No one should ever suffer alone.

Budget Roundtable

We had the honour of having MPP Yvan Baker in our riding to discuss our recent Provincial Budget and to hear the concerns of our community.

CHATS in Aurora hosted a roundtable discussion with various organizations from across Newmarket-Aurora. The feedback around the Budget was positive, and there was good discussion about Seniors Issues, Healthcare, Pharmacare for Youth, Mental Health and the Province's new Dementia Strategy.

MPP Baker is the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance and is very knowledgeable about the budget.

Thank you to all the organizations that participated. We are listening and will take your questions and comments to Queen's Park.

Aurora Street Festival

Thank you to everyone that came out to the Aurora Street Festival on Sunday. I enjoy participating in these neighbourhood events. It's always nice to catch up with friends and neighbours, and to meet people from across my riding.

As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org.

I look forward to hearing from you.