

Changing Workplaces Review
Submission by Blair Burns
Of Listowel, ON
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Initial comments

- Special Advisors, Mr. Michael Mitchell and the Honorable John Murray
- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present my comments at this review.
- My name is Blair Burns. I am a Human Resource Manager with an auto parts manufacturer in southern Ontario. I have been in Human Resources for some 30 years and have become well exposed and familiar with the North American and more recently the world wide competitive situation that Canada and specifically Ontario is immersed in.
- The effects of this competition is all around us and regularly we hear through the media of plant closures and job losses.
- I have myself been affected by this, as well as my community, neighbours and friends.
- Ontario is a great place to live and we have a standard of living envied by most other jurisdictions and countries.
- I want to hold on to this for all Ontarians and I feel it is necessary to voice my concerns since I feel this standard of living is at risk.
- We have to be aware of our competitive situation and not place ourselves in a position making it an easy decision to move businesses elsewhere.
- As you know, fewer manufacturing jobs in Ontario will result in a smaller tax base and therefore put pressure on our health care, education and other important public services.
- I will speak on a few aspects of our Employment Standards Act and our competitiveness.

Emergency Leave Days

- This legislation, while well intended by the government of the day, has hurt employers who have always treated their employees with fairness and respect.
- The intended focus was on employers who do not treat their employees well, but those employers can very well skirt the EL rules and likely still mistreat their employees.
- So I would argue this legislation did not significantly help employees who work for such employers.
- This legislation has harmed the rest of us, by increasing costs and added unnecessary administrative work.
- I estimate this legislation has cost my company about \$200k per year due to increased absenteeism, which we have to cover with overtime. On average we experience about 6 "call in absent" days per year per employee versus pre EL days of about 4 days per year. About 25% are 3 days or less but another 25% max out the 10 Emergency Leave days per year.
- Many employees feel ~~there~~^{at} they are entitled to 10 days off per year, over and above their vacation allotment, so many take the full 10 days. Many of our employees come to HR and ask, "how many EL days to I have left?", feeling entitled to use them up.
- Interesting enough we experience near "0" absenteeism the days before or after a statutory holiday, when you don't get the holiday pay if you miss the day before or after.
- Therefore I ask you to consider scaling back or eliminate this legislation.
- On a side note; this legislation must burn up millions in \$\$ in our health care system on Ontario as employees are required to get doctor notes to cover EL days. Several years ago the chief doctor at our local clinic called me and other local HR managers to her office to say doctors are not our company's attendance management system and so will not provide attendance notes. This clinic was experiencing up to 45 appointments per day just to see employees for doctor notes, which in most cases was after the fact and so the doctor could only write, "This person saw me saying they were ill so was off earlier this week."

Adding more programs which cost money!

- I have heard that one new proposed ESA idea is “paid sick days”.
- While hopefully well intentioned, and not just a political ploy, this program if implemented will significantly add cost to employers.
- Most large employers like ourselves already have numerous programs such as; health benefits, short term sick pay, 3 to 4 weeks vacation and retirement savings plans; so random “paid sick days” is not needed. Our employees can opt for a vacation day to cover sick days, and when you have 3 or 4 weeks vacation this is our way of covering this.
- While not part of this review, Ontario has already passed a bill for the Ontario Registered Pension Plan. This new program will cost employers and employees 1.9% of their pay. My company already has an RSP Retirement saving plan, which exceeds the new ORPP program. We can't cover both programs so our RSP program will likely go.

Final comments!

- Finally, it all comes down to competitiveness. Our business is not rocket science and every other country has access to the technology. We depend on our people, their effective, educated and dedicated service.
- We “have” to treat our people well as the unemployment rate is relatively low in our area and if we don’t, then they will move to an employer who will treat them well.
- Programs, whether through this review process or not, like the Ontario Pension Plan, which will cost money, will reduce our ability to compete globally.
- Thank you for taking the time to listen. Do you have any questions?
- Regards, Blair Burns.