

## ***CB, Co-chair of OCF***

***Thank you for the  
opportunity to make a  
presentation today***

,an opportunity which I want to make the  
best use of.

The Guide to these Consultations does  
an excellent job of framing the complex  
issues workers in Ontario are faced with

in this modern economy, and I certainly want to meaningfully build on that foundation. In doing so, I could easily focus on how unionized workers require protection from the adverse effects the global economy is having on them – having been active in the labour movement for 20 years, and a legal assistant for 30 years, I consider myself somewhat of an expert, particularly with respect to how technological change

can erode meaningful work and create a greater imbalance of power in favour of employers, as well as inefficiencies in workplace productivity.

However, my passion for the work of the Ontario Common Front and the profound impact working with marginalized members of the community has had on me is the story I must tell today. Many unionized workers will have their voices heard as you travel

across the province, so I aim to represent those workers who have the least protection – the growing number of working people in Ontario who essentially have no voice.

I am referring to the more than 1.7 million low-wage workers in our province, who make up almost 30% of all workers in Ontario. And the 4 in 10 of those low wage workers who cannot

rely on predictable work hours. I see the faces behind these statistics every day in Scarborough, and throughout the GTA. The mostly racialized men and women in my community who, at the best of times, struggle with low wages, variable hours and poor working conditions; and who, at the worst of times, have limited or no access to paid sick time, vacation time, or leaves of absences.

Knowing all too well that low wage workers are more likely to be racialized recent immigrants, their struggles have had a profound impact on me as a daughter of immigrants whose family settled here during an era when immigrants were able to provide a better life for themselves and their children. A time when our social principles were reflected in our workplaces and embedded in our labour laws. My father

spent his career working for the Province of Ontario, knowing that through hard work and perseverance, he could improve my family's standard of living and pave the way for his children to have an even better life. Those principles are still spoken about in this province, but they are no longer reflected in the lives of the growing number of temporary agency workers, migrant workers, contract service

workers and so-called independent contractors, and our laws simply do not protect the growing number of workers forced to accept these forms of non-standard work.

Not having been union members, my parents don't completely understand why I can't just appreciate what I have, and they certainly do not understand why I would ever jeopardize what I have



by challenging what is happening to thousands of working people today who are less fortunate. Well, many unionized workers are experiencing a growing power imbalance in favour of management in unionized workplaces. It is so clear that, unless we reverse the erosion of workers' rights and declining union density in Ontario, and allow working people to freely engage in collective action and join unions without

fearing for their jobs, there is little hope for this generation of working people, let alone generations to follow.

I want so much to educate, mobilize and engage marginalized workers, but I simply cannot betray the trust placed in me, especially by racialized women, by encouraging them to stand up for their rights, knowing their families may face financial ruin if they do so. Nor can I

assure them that the inadequate legislation that does exist to protect them will be enforced as it should be.

So, this is what I do tell them: unions are the pathway out of poverty and unions are the best defence against rising inequality and precarious work. I have recently been able to happily tell them our provincial government is reviewing how our current laws can be

updated to provide adequate protection and facilitate freedom of association, the right to unionize and exercise the rights of collective action, including collective bargaining.

This leads me to present a dual solution to these problems by advocating for improved protections under the ESA for vulnerable workers, and also expanding

opportunities through the OLRA for them to benefit from union security.

With regard to the former, amendments to the ESA that would increase predictability of scheduling and increase paid time off would provide an important improvement to the income and working lives of low-wage workers.

Furthermore, the fact that, in the highly competitive work environments of today,

employers will inevitably cut regulatory corners, changes such as anonymous third party complaints and anti-reprisal protection must be made to support workers' ability to enforce their rights.

Moving on from that, the OLRA needs to ensure the pathways to trade union representation are open for low-wage Ontarians. Legislation should be modernized to extend successor rights

to the growing number of vulnerable workers in the contract sector who are at risk of losing all collective agreement protections when contracts are retendered. And with regard to organizing workers, legislative framework must be established to enable sectoral bargaining in Ontario; the OLRB needs to be able to direct employers to provide unions with proper lists from which bargaining units can be

organized; and workers should only need to vote once so that when a clear majority sign a union card, they are certified. Flowing from that, workers who are disciplined, discharged or discriminated against because they are exercising their rights during any type of organizing campaign must be immediately reinstated.



I would like to use my final moments to comment on a very specific area which you may not hear a lot about. That is protection of privacy for working people and providing legislation to protect workers against all forms of workplace monitoring, including the monitoring of workplace e-mail accounts.

Again, thank you so much for this opportunity. The scope of this review is

large, and there is much damage to be repaired through it. I hope my presentation has added value to this process.