

Good Morning,

The Ottawa and District Labour Council is one of the oldest organizations in the city of Ottawa dating back to 1872. In addition, with over 90 different union locals representing over 55,000 working men and women in the city of Ottawa our labour council is one of the largest amongst the 112 labour councils across the country.

Our vast history in our community – in our city - has allowed us the opportunity to see many changes in respect to legislation – to law – and to policy – as it affects working people.

Some of those changes – good – many not so good.

In addition – times do change – advancements are made – technology is prevalent – society adjusts – but often what has always existed as it pertains to working people – remains the same. As a result - ensuring a fair, equitable and just society for all – worsens. The divide becomes greater.

And we appreciate – as do a whole pile of other people – an attempt – by government – to modify legislation – in the best interests of workers and businesses in our province.



In any given week – we receive a call – sometimes more than one - from different individuals in the city – about different employers. These aren't union members – but rather individuals who don't have the benefit of a union. The call is always about something that has happened at the workplace. And there is a multitude of reasons for the call – harassment by the employer – short hours on their pay check – no pay check – docked money off their pay for something that happened or didn't happen – and the list goes on.

And after we talk for a while – the first thing I say to – to – all of them – is – we can try and help you – but the first thing you need to know – the first thing you need to know - is that – the chances are great – that if you raise the issue with your employer – with your boss – you'll be fired. They can't fire you for that – but they'll simply find another reason. If you put in a complaint with the Ministry of Labour – you'll lose your job. In most cases that's a fact.

Many individuals – for a number of reasons – perhaps they're new to our city – our country – and maybe not – maybe they desperately need the job they're working at – these folks often – are too scared to complain – for fear of reprisal – from their employer – and in most instances they would be right.

Increased penalties and fines for employers and the enforcement of those penalties and better protection for workers if they file a complaint must become part of your recommendations to government. Of that there is absolutely no question.

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We're hearing more and more of businesses encouraging individuals to work from home. There are organizations that have set up such as Workshift Canada that has partnered with some cities including our city – Ottawa – as well as others such as Calgary, Halifax, Toronto who promote the idea that employees be permitted to work at least a part of the week at home.

A better home/work balance - Workshift Canada contends through the idea of working from home - while we suggest - it's the exact opposite. For so many reasons this is not good for anyone – especially workers.

In some instances individuals already work from home – they're already contracting – we get that – and it may work fine. But our point – is those – who may be required by their employer to work from home a part of the week – or even given the option by the employer – legislation must ensure protection for these workers.

Like us there are many presenters talking about card based certification. This is certainly a no brainer to most. A signed union card should be – no must be – the only vote required – to join a union. Not another ballot – that's absolute nonsense and allows – reprisal and intimidation from an employer. If a majority of workers at a workplace sign a union card – that union becomes certified.

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As you're well aware the use of scabs during a strike or lockout prolongs that work disruption. You also know that the vast majority of collective agreements are negotiated without a strike or lock out taking place. British Columbia and Quebec have anti scab legislation and the results there are clear in that work disruptions amount to about half of the national average.

I know you're aware of Crown Holdings and the almost two year strike that has been going on there. Also the company's use of replacement workers and the position by Crown that even if a settlement is reached – only about 25 percent of the current workers there would be kept – the others sent packing.

The use of replacement workers must be prohibited during a strike or lockout.

Those who try to organize a union in the workplace are often subjected to reprisal and intimidation from the employer. Legislation must exist to ensure an employer can not take disciplinary action against anyone for simply trying to speak to a co-worker about joining a union.

We're hearing more and more about internships. Right here in Ottawa we have more than one job placement agency that advertises internships for – for Sheet Metal Workers – for Carpenters – for Plumbers. No pay – but with the experience gained – employment – will surely follow a placement – they state.

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Although some protections to “internships” does exist – more needs to be done.

We’ve stated – on numerous occasions that when government – business and Labour work together – a lot can be accomplished – in the best interest of all.

We don’t suggest that each and every employer in this province treats their employees unfairly. There are a significant number of employers – of businesses – who offer respect – who offer dignity – who offer a fair wage – who ensure a workplace is a healthy workplace – is a safe workplace. The problem is – not all do.

The playing field needs to be level – today it ain’t so – unquestionably favouring the employer.

It continually frustrates – when I hear others say – things like “well if you don’t like your job – quit” or “you wouldn’t be making minimum wage – if you would have stayed in school.” It doesn’t work that way – and those making those statements have absolutely no clue – no clue - what the real world is like for many – including those who need to work two and three jobs – just to put food on the table for them and to feed their children.

This is about workers – this is about ensuring that all workers in this province are treated with respect and with dignity – are paid a fair wage - and are provided a secure – a safe and healthy workplace.

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At the same time – its recognized – that as labour – that as a worker – we need to ensure our employer – and/or the business at which we work – is a prosperous one – for that will ensure long term employment for us and for many others.

But that success can never be attained solely on the back and off the sweat of a worker.

Thank you

Presented by:

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