

Jones fears labour legislation will impact businesses

By Bill Rea

The Provincial government has announced numerous changes that will impact working people in Ontario.

The government is speaking positively about the proposals, and even Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones wasn't completely negative.

"There are some things in there I believe will help people," she remarked, citing provisions to bring in paid sick days for every worker. But she added she was disappointed Premier Kathleen Wynne is politicizing the issue, making the announcement a year before the coming election.

The provisions the government has announced include raising Ontario's general minimum wage to \$14 per hour Jan. 1, 2018, and then to \$15 Jan. 1, 2019, followed by annual increases at the rate of inflation. The government is also calling for equal pay for part-time, temporary, casual and seasonal employees doing the same job as full-time employees; and equal pay for temporary-help agency employees doing the same job as permanent staff, and ensuring at least three weeks vacation after five years with the same employer.

In making the announcement, the government pointed out the economy in Ontario has been doing well over the last three years, compared to other economies within G7 countries, but many workers are struggling, trying to support families with part-time, contract or minimum-wage jobs.

But Jones pointed out the increase to the minimum wage will impact businesses and their ability to provide jobs. She added her Progressive Conservative colleagues have been calling for a business case to be made.

"I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to see there will be business impacts," she commented, adding the increased costs will drive prices up and students will have a harder time finding summer jobs.

Jones wasn't very impressed with the provisions to have workers get three weeks vacation after five years, pointing out a lot of companies already do that. Most employers put such encouragement in place as a means of keeping good staff.

"Legislation is not going to encourage that now because they know good employees are like gold," she observed.

"Ontario's economy is strong and it is growing," Wynne observed. "Yet many people feel uncertain about their futures in a changing world."

"As a government, we can and must be a force for good," she added. "That is why we are taking bold action so that everyone can feel more secure and confident about the future. We are making life more affordable and fair, and investing in the people, communities and businesses that make our province great. We are building a better life and a better future for everyone."

"Ontario's economy is strong and growing, but not everyone is feeling it," Labour Minister Kevin Flynn added. "Today, we took the next step toward making sure that every hard-working Ontarian can share in Ontario's prosperity. These initiatives will help build a province where security and opportunity are available for everyone."