

Minimum wage increasing to \$16.55 in Ontario this fall

By Brian Lockhart

The minimum wage in Ontario will increase to \$16.55 per hour in Ontario effective October 1.

This marks a 6.8 per cent increase from the current rate of \$15.50 per hour ? an increase tied to inflation.

The increase would see someone making minimum wage and working a 40-hour week earn nearly \$2,200 more per year.

Some labour advocates and opposition critics have said the minimum wage should increase to \$20 per hour.

?I'm proud of my record around minimum wage, to increase it to \$16.55 an hour, the highest of any province in the country,? said Ontario Labour Minister, Monte McNaughton. ?But I also want to be clear that minimum wage jobs should be a starting point and not an end point. That's why we're investing hundreds of millions of dollars to retain and upskill workers for bigger paycheques. This latest increase is a fair and balanced approach that means more money in their pockets so they can support their families and continuing building a stronger Ontario for all of us.?

McNaughton added that the province is also working on its portable benefits plan that would provide health and dental benefits attached to a worker, not a workplace.

Across the province, just over 40 per cent of workers at or below the current general minimum wage of \$15.50 per hour are in retail trade, and almost 25 per cent are in accommodation and food services.

Ontario's new minimum wage is the highest of any province in the country. Quebec has a minimum wage of \$14.25 per hour. British Columbia has a minimum wage of \$15.65, while Alberta has a minimum wage of \$15.00 per hour.

The wage rates will also increase for students under 18, who work 28 hours per week or less when school is in session, from \$14.60 to \$15.60.

For homeworkers, who do paid work out of their own homes for employers, they will see an increase from \$14.60 to \$15.60 per hour.