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Solidarity with Tim Hortons Workers

Since the introduction of the new \$14 minimum wage on January 1st, workers across the province have been subjected to bullying by their bosses. Workers have had benefits reduced or eliminated and unfair and sometimes illegal roll backs have been common.

Perhaps no business has been more blatant in their attacks on workers than Tim Hortons.

The owners of the Tims franchises in Cobourg told employees that they would be forced to pay for their own uniforms and to have their tiny perks, such as one free drink per shift, eliminated.

The Tims franchises in Cobourg are owned by the heirs to the vast fortune amassed by the company since its founding in 1964. The family patriarch, Ron Joyce is worth \$1.4 billion and lives in a mansion in Florida in the winter. His children were the ones who wrote the notice to employees that they were having their benefits reduced.

These people have the ability to both pay a living wage and to provide benefits for their employees. It is shocking that they would



be so openly greedy.

But they are not alone. Workers at restaurants such as the Sunset Grill chain are being told that their tips will be taken by management.

These bosses and many others are trying to use the minimum wage increase to take even more from their employees.

Media coverage of the raise has focused on the short term impact on bosses while saying little or nothing about the need for the increase.

Income inequality in Ontario has been growing and the minimum wage has not kept up with rising expenses. A study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that the bottom half of wage earners in Ontario account for only 19 percent of the wealth gener-

ated in the province.

And most media coverage has ignored the studies that have shown that a minimum wage increase actually improves the economy.

A study done in the US by the National Employment Law Project looking at the impacts of minimum wage increases since 1938 showed that they do not reduce jobs. In fact, in most

of the cases studied, a raise in the minimum wage actually increases employment.

This study concludes that "opponents' perennial predictions of job losses when minimum-wage increases are proposed are rooted in ideology, not evidence."

Workers earning minimum wage tend to spend their money locally, which stimulates the economy.

While some have called for a boycott of Tim Hortons, we believe that it is better to show our solidarity with the workers by calling on the bosses to end the punitive attacks on workers and, crucially to support union drives that can give power to the people who actually produce the wealth – the workers!

Bully Boss attacking your rights at work?



In Ontario?

Call the Workers' Action Centre

1-855-531-0778

In 2018, keep fighting for \$15 and fairness

By **Peter Hogarth**

This New Year's workers across Ontario can celebrate the passing of Bill 148, which will give 1.7 million workers a pay raise on January 1. The victory was not a Christmas present from the Liberals but a product of campaigning, agitating, fighting and striking to win \$15 and Fairness by workers across the province. But it is clear that corporations, many business owners and their representatives are out to destroy the gains that have been won.

Starting January 2018, Ontario's minimum wage will rise to \$14 an hour; every worker will have access to 10 days of job-protected, emergency leave (including two paid days), and equal pay for equal work for full-time, part-time, casual and temporary agency workers; it will be easier for many to join unions (especially cleaners, security guards, homecare and community service workers) and there will be better protection against contract flipping. By January 2019, the minimum wage will rise to \$15/hour and there will be huge improvements to scheduling that give on-call workers a guaranteed three hours of pay if their shift is cancelled or they are not called in. However, with the looming election, these last two are not guaranteed and the current gains are already coming under attack.

Business backlash

The business community has come out against decent work and improvements to labour laws.

Metro grocery stores have released statements saying that they are looking to automation, price increases, job cuts and getting rid of 24 hour grocery service because of Bill 148. Loblaws has warned that it will cut jobs to cope with rising labour costs. Ottawa's Black Tomato restaurant claimed that it was forced to close its doors because of the minimum wage raise. A Collingwood daycare owner claims she was forced to close because she can't afford to pay her workers the new minimum wage. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses have claimed that recent minimum wage increases have been a disaster for small business.

These are cynical attempts to sow fear and confusion among workers and the general public about raising working standards. Metro and Loblaws had profits of \$132.4 million and \$201 million respectively, increases from the previous year. The Black Tomato restaurant has been for sale since 2016, long before the proposed legislation, and the Little People's Day Care in Collingwood has been up for sale more than three months before Bill 148 was even proposed. The OCC and CFIB are ignoring the many studies showing that recent minimum wage hikes have shown positive benefits to places like Seattle and New York.

These business owners are waging class warfare against raising the standards for workers in Ontario. Whether they are small businesses using their last dying breath to curse raises for workers and better scheduling or

huge corporations trying to keep their profit margins at the expense of the workers who produce all the wealth, battle lines are being drawn in this province—and taking centre stage in the upcoming election.

A recent Angus Reid poll found that 60 percent of people in Ontario support the \$15 minimum wage—twice the percentage that oppose it—and support rises to two-thirds among women. Not surprisingly, the greatest opposition is from Tories voters and those with a household income of more than \$100,000 a year (but even 51 per cent of people in this income bracket support the raise).

We know the Tories are out to destroy the gains we've made and the way to counter that is not by putting our hopes in the Liberals or even the NDP, but rather by demonstrating the power of the workers in Ontario. That means we need to use the changes to Ontario labour laws that make it easier to form unions to organize workers into unions and bargain \$15 and Fairness into those contracts to defend our gains. We need to spread the word about all we've won and all there still is to win if we can stay organized to strike for decent work if necessary. We should be fighting to make our schools become \$15 and Fairness campuses, where everyone has decent work. The \$15 and Fairness campaign needs to continue to show its power in the streets and in the workplaces to defend what we've won and demand more.

• **For more information visit 15andfairness.org**

Can we rely on the Liberals?

Kathleen Wynne has told the bully bosses to pick a fight with her rather than attack workers receiving the wage increases. This has led many to put their faith in the Liberal government to protect workers.

But a cursory look at the record of this government shows us a different story. Just a couple of days before they passed bill 148, the same Liberal government legislated striking college faculty back to work. By legislating an end to the strike, Wynne's legislation undercut the strike just hours after faculty had decisively defeated the employer's offer.

The contradiction of undermining a strike against precarious work while passing a bill against precarious work should not be lost on those who think the Liberal government has suddenly become worker friendly.

The Tories have promised to delay the next wage increase. In the last election, they vowed to slash 100,000 good public sector jobs. We can expect them to continue their support for big business.

Shamefully, the NDP has been largely absent from the battlefield on FF15. They need to step up, show public support for the workers and push for greater gains if they want to be seen as a left alternative to the two-faced Liberals.

Ultimately, no party will ensure the success of the Fight for \$15. It will be up to the workers and activists who made it happen to continue to build the broadest support for workers' rights.

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