

Debate over \$15 minimum wage getting ugly

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The Ontario government issued a release Wednesday (Nov. 22) launching a personal rebuke against opposition MPPs who voted against a \$15 minimum wage and a raft of other labour reforms.

Ontario's minimum wage is set to increase to \$14 per hour in the new year, then jump to \$15 an hour in January 2019.

In the release sent to The IFP, the Wynne government singled out Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott.

"The (Progressive) Conservatives, including local Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott, have finally shown their true colours," wrote the Liberals.

"Today, they voted against Ontario's Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs Act, effectively saying no to a \$15 minimum wage, no to equal pay for part-time and full-time workers, no to expanded personal emergency leave, and no to at least three weeks of vacation after five years of service," added the release.

The government is referring to Bill 148, which the majority Liberals passed in the house on Wednesday.

day.

"Despite our growing economy, some Ontarians in Wellington-Halton Hills are working full-time yet are struggling to pay rent, put food on the table or care for their families. These people can't afford to wait," said Kevin Flynn, Liberal MPP for Oakville. "For them, delaying a minimum-wage increase is the same as denying one. They understand better than anyone that what the (Progressive) Conservatives are proposing is unfair."

On Thursday, Arnott replied to those accusations and himself accused the Liberals of making false statements and mischaracterizing the Tories' position.

"The Liberals are making up false statements about our position on the minimum wage. As we have seen in recent months, they will literally say anything to try to hang on to power," said Arnott, adding the Wynne government's position on the minimum wage file as late January 2017 was that the minimum wage was right where it should be.

"In January of this year, Kathleen Wynne was interviewed by CBC Radio and she stated that a big increase in Ontario's minimum



Graeme Frisque/Metroland

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott responds to the Wynne government's accusations of not caring about Ontario's workers after voting against the government's impending labour reforms.

wage was not being planned. However, after her approval ratings went south, she decided to politicize the minimum wage issue. In May, the government introduced Bill 148," he added.

Arnott is referring to a news conference Wynne held in January where she claimed tying the minimum wage to inflation was working, and saw no need for a big hike four months later she was singing a different tune.

Arnott believes that has nothing to do with what's best for Ontarians and the economy at large, but rather has everything to do with her re-

cord-low approval numbers at the time.

As reported by The Toronto Star on Nov. 10, a recent Campaign Research survey had Wynne's approval rating sitting at just 16 per cent - not much higher than it was in May when the Liberals did a 180 on their position on the minimum wage.

"On almost every issue, first and foremost, they are looking out for their own political self-interest," said Arnott in an earlier interview. "Right now, they seem to care about nothing else."

Arnott clarified his party's position on the matter, essentially dis-

missing the accusation the PCs don't care about Ontario's low-wage earners, and accused the government of throwing small and medium-sized businesses under the bus in a short-sighted re-election ploy.

"Our Ontario PC caucus accepts the idea of a higher minimum wage, indeed the need for it under this government because of the rising cost of living, including skyrocketing hydro bills.

"However, we believe that increasing it at this pace will lead to lost jobs and reduced hours for workers. A number of credible studies back this up. One such study projected 185,000 jobs are now in jeopardy because of Bill 148. When we asked the government to table its own cost-benefit analysis, they refused to do so," he said.

"Our PC caucus believes a more prudent and appropriate approach would be to phase-in the increase from \$14 an hour to \$15 an hour over a four-year period."

"In our parliamentary system, it is the role of the Opposition to point out the flaws and drawbacks of the government's proposals and agenda. This we continue to do at Queen's Park," added Arnott.



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|  <p>Marissa Pereira January 3, 2017</p> |  <p>Hudson Borg January 28, 2017</p> |  <p>Dean Katorsky Liam Katorsky February 28, 2017</p> |  <p>Dayton Elizabeth Dunne May 19, 2017</p> |
|  <p>Hudson Jude & Finley Shea Canning-Mayer May 31, 2017</p> |  <p>Isabella Louise Christine Redding July 22, 2017</p> |  <p>Melia Patricia Raine Peel October 24, 2017</p> |  <p>Nalla Lynn Humberstone November 17, 2017</p> |