

# Minister of Labour guest speaker at recent Chamber event

## MPP explains Changing Workplaces Review

By Julie Slack  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

There are business owners out there who feel that the rules of the Employment Standards Act don't apply to them.

That's one of the things Minister of Labour and Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn helps rectify, among many other responsibilities.

The Minister of Labour and Oakville MPP was the guest speaker at the Milton Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting held at the Canadian Welders Bureau in Milton last Tuesday (Nov. 8).

After Premier Kathleen Wynne was elected, she tasked him with preparing a Changing Workplaces Review. Flynn said he thought that would be a technical exercise, but he quickly learned it to be otherwise. He has discovered that it's much more about people, families and small business owners.

An interim report has been released by the Province with options

to amend acts that help to protect workers and support business.

It's the first time ever in the history of the province that a review of the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act has been carried out at the same time, said Flynn. Ontario's workplace is changing at an impressive rate," he said, "though that shouldn't surprise anybody."

"The changing technology, the way we do things, the equipment we have available to us, the automation that's involved in our production practices, is something that I think we can imagine 10, 15 or 20 years ago," he said.

Ontario businesses have "really risen to the challenge when it comes to the demands of competing in a global economy," he added.

But there are some employers out there who cheat the system, he said, before listing some facts: our provincial GDP leads the nation, unemployment rate is the lowest in the country

"We're doing very, very well in On-



Labour Minister Kevin Flynn, MPP for Oakville, addresses guests a Milton Chamber of Commerce meeting.  
Julie Slack / Canadian Champion

tario and much of the thanks for that goes to you — ordinary people that get out of bed everyday and decide that they're going to start businesses, or they're going to run businesses that they started some time ago." However, Flynn pointed to some disturbing trends.

"There are some people in our society who aren't doing as well as in the past," he said. "They're facing some significant challenges in just going through the daily routine of work.

"That's one of the reasons we've

launched the Changing Workplaces Review."

There are now more vulnerable workers in the province with more people living in poverty, he said.

Nearly one in five workers now have part-time work, they earn about half as much as someone who's working full-time.

Temporary employment continues to rise at an average rate of 3.5 per cent annually. More than 10 per cent of workers are involved in what are considered temporary jobs.

"And we have more people forced to work more than one job simply to pay the bills or pay the rent," he said.

The review, explained Flynn, is about improving the business model, "specifically businesses like you that play by the rules."

"It's about businesses unlike those people in this room, that somehow think that they can play above the rules — that the rules apply to you, but they don't apply to somebody else," he continued. "That you pay vacation pay, or you pay overtime, but they don't have to."

Flynn said there are employers who

take advantage of people and try to find ways to get around the law.

"Because of that, we have to put in place legislation that protects workers and businesses," he said.

Despite this, "There's a sense of decency with the workplace in Ontario," noted Flynn, adding that it's no surprise that Ontario is the place where people want to live.

"We can prosper, we can take on the world and there's also the sense that we owe something to each other."

He said that Ontarians built a place that most people would find to be a very good place to call home.

"It's no accident that people move from all around the world to Canada, and it's no accident that they choose southern Ontario as the place they want to live," he said.

"That's because of the work that you've done... the work the chamber of commerce has done."

Flynn said he hopes to present a balanced bill in the spring that "understands that business needs to be competitive, but also takes into account there's a sense of decency toward each other."



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