

# Arnott questions evidence behind \$15 minimum-wage hike

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Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott, along with the Progressive Conservative (PC) caucus and others, are raising concerns over the effects a \$15 minimum wage might have on small businesses and the economy at large.

Premier Kathleen Wynne announced plans last week to increase the province's minimum wage from the current rate of \$11.40 to \$14 per hour next year, and \$15 by 2019.

We recognize the need for higher wages when this Liberal government continues to make life unaffordable, according to the Ontario PC's official position. However, we absolutely have concerns. This is a 32 (per cent) hike in the minimum wage in an extremely short period of time.

The minimum wage in Ontario has seen many hikes since 2007, when Statistics Canada reported it at \$8 per hour. That represented a \$3.40 hike over 10 years, compared to a \$3.60 hike over the next two.

We're concerned about the impact on small business owners, who will be bearing the brunt of these mandated pay hikes. This could result in job losses, and reduced

work hours, says the PC caucus.

In her announcement last Tuesday (May 30), at what The Toronto Star described as a campaign-style event while comparing the presser to a slick TV talk-show-like setting, Wynne laid out the government's plan to overhaul the province's labour laws.

Right now, 10 per cent of workers in our province earn the minimum wage of \$11.40. Thirty per cent earn less than \$15 an hour. That's millions of people, many of them supporting a family on a wage that just doesn't go far enough, she said.

Other components of the province's Changing Workplaces Review which Arnott pointed out hasn't even been introduced in the legislature yet include equal pay for part-time and full-time workers, as well as an additional week of mandated paid vacation from two weeks to three.

The opposition and small business advocacy groups aren't convinced the province is making these decisions and announcements based on evidence of economic value, but rather in response to historically low approval numbers ahead of next summer's provincial election.

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