

January 25, 2018

Dear Premier Wynne,

In response to your recent tweet expressing your willingness to discuss the minimum wage increase with Ontario business owners, we are writing this letter on behalf of our respective Boards of Directors and the more than 1,100 member businesses represented by our organizations. We appreciate your openness in discussing this issue with us, and we thank you for your time in listening to our concerns.

Since Bill 148 came into effect on January 1, we have received significant and ongoing feedback from our members. As the voice of business in Ottawa, we believe it is our responsibility to take a clear stand in relation to this issue, and to express to you our concerns regarding the business pressures that Bill 148 has imposed on our members. The minimum wage increase coupled with the sheer number of changes put forward in Bill 148, will significantly impact our members' businesses. The cumulative effect is staggering.

As members of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, we strongly supported that organization's original calls for the provincial government to consider phasing in the legislation over a longer period of time, in order to allow businesses proper time to prepare for such a steep increase in labour costs. According to the Ontario Chamber's own research, the new legislation will potentially place up to 185,000 Ontario jobs at risk, and we believe that this poses an unacceptable risk to the strength and resiliency of our members and to the local economy in all parts of Ottawa.

While we applaud your decisiveness in addressing the challenge of income inequality in our province, and while we strongly support your government's commitment to ensure that Ontario's growth is shared amongst all its residents, we are concerned that the political debate around this issue has created a counter-productive environment that has mischaracterized our province's incredibly hardworking small business owners. We would like to see a recognition on behalf of your government that the implementation of this legislation is proving immensely challenging for Ontario's small business sector, and that your government is actively considering measures to help companies to mitigate the negative effects of Bill 148.

With this year's provincial budget, your government has the opportunity to demonstrate its laudable aspiration to address income inequality while also proving its ongoing commitment to economic growth and the importance of a strong and resilient private sector. As such, we urge you to include in this year's budget any offsets in relation to Bill 148, including the various provisions announced by Finance Minister Charles Sousa in his fall economic update in November, 2017. Further to this, we ask that your government consider any additional offsets called for by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Again, we very much appreciate your willingness to consider the concerns of our organizations and the hundreds of members we represent. If you would like to further discuss with our members the issues raised in this letter, we would be more than happy to help facilitate this.

Yours sincerely,



Mischa Kaplan  
Chair, West Ottawa Board of Trade



Ian M. Sherman, FCPA, FCA, ICD.D  
Chair, Ottawa Chamber of Commerce