

Business, labour brace for changes to Ontario's workplace laws

'We're challenging whether such sweeping reforms are necessary,' says Ontario Chamber of Commerce



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Employers are not required to pay Ontario workers when they take a day off sick. That's one of the many rules that could change in a sweeping review of the province's labour laws.

Businesses in Ontario are spooked by the wide scope of possible changes to the province's labour and employment laws.

The Liberal government is about to receive recommendations that could lead to the most significant reforms to Ontario's employment laws since the 1990s.

- [Big changes considered for Ontario workplaces](#)
- [As work world shifts, Ontario looks to reform labour laws](#)

Mandatory sick pay, shifting the threshold for overtime, boosting the minimum paid vacation, advance scheduling, and making it easier to join a union are [all under consideration](#).

"We're challenging whether or not such sweeping reforms are necessary," said Karl Baldauf, vice-president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Its 60,000 members employ some two million people in the province.



Karl Baldauf, vice-president of policy and government relations for the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, is warning against 'new, onerous regulations.' (Ontario Chamber of Commerce)

"We have to make sure that you're not putting businesses in a position where they will actually be less inclined to hire or less inclined to expand as a result of new, onerous regulations," Baldauf said in an interview with CBC News.

Baldauf met with Ontario's Labour Minister Kevin Flynn on Monday to urge the government not to make changes without solid evidence about the costs and benefits.

Premier Kathleen Wynne ordered the review of the province's labour and employment laws in 2015, with a focus on precarious employment and vulnerable workers.

Businesses have been buzzing about the potential reforms since the government's hand-picked special advisers released an interim report last summer, listing more than 200 proposals under consideration. Their final report is to be handed to Flynn in the coming days.

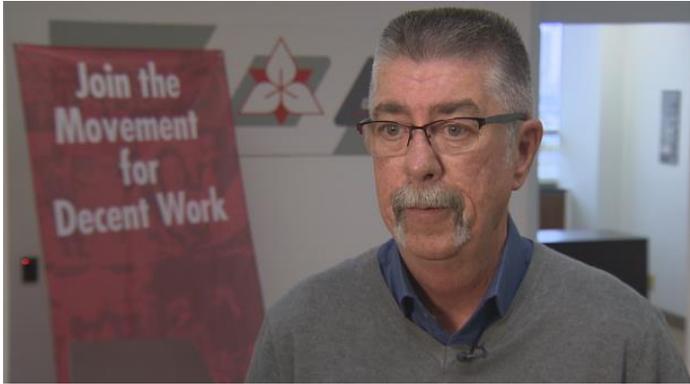
A coalition of employer groups called Keep Ontario Working said in a statement the government "cannot risk public policy changes that would place unintended burdens" on businesses.

"Employers in Ontario should be concerned the final recommendations from the special advisers will most certainly include amendments designed to increase union density," warns the Toronto law firm Sherrard Kuzz.

'Serious measures to help all workers'

Some of the reforms being considered include banning replacement workers during strikes and lockouts, allowing domestic workers to join unions, and changing the rules about how unions are formed in certain industries that tend to be non-unionized.

"We're hopeful that the government takes serious measures to help all workers, whether they belong to a union or not," said Ontario Federation of Labour president Chris Buckley.



'It's far too easy for employers to not be serious at the bargaining table when they can bring in replacement workers,' said Chris Buckley, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. (CBC)

"There's such a host of issues that are wrong," Buckley said in an interview with CBC News. "You have workers sitting at home waiting for the phone to ring, they don't have their schedules in advance. You have workers who don't have paid sick days."

Ontario's Employment Standards Act currently does not require employers to give any paid sick days. The law requires a minimum of two weeks annual paid vacation, and the government's advisers are considering whether to recommend boosting that to three weeks.

The advisers are also considering whether to recommend a law that would force employers to give workers advance notice of their schedules.

The Wynne government has made no decisions yet about what policies — if any — will change.