



# Provincial Election 2007



## Raising the Minimum Wage

Today's hard-working families can't wait three more years for a fair \$10 minimum wage. A minimum wage earner in Ontario today receives 20% less in real wages (adjusted for inflation) than they did 30 years ago.

There are 1.2 million people in this province who work for less than \$10 an hour. Minimum wage earners are mostly women, and disproportionately they are recent immigrants. Thirty-one percent of women workers and 38% of women of colour receive poverty wages compared to only 18% of men. Forty-one percent of immigrants of colour earn \$10 or less. The majority of low wage workers (over 55%) are full time workers aged 25 to 64 years. Most minimum wage earners work in the service sector, and one in five workers in accommodation and food services earn minimum wage.

After a hugely successful campaign for a \$10 minimum wage by the labour movement, community groups and the NDP, the McGuinty Liberals finally bowed to public pressure and announced the phasing in of \$0.75 an hour annual increases in the minimum wage starting next March 31. This was after Liberal and Conservative MPPs voted themselves a 31% raise, which took effect immediately. Their raise alone is more than a full year's income of a worker earning minimum wage in Ontario.

This promise by the government to increase the minimum wage to \$10 over the next three years will still leave minimum wage earners unable to raise their families above the poverty line. A single person working 40 hours a week at \$8.75 an hour will still be earning \$2,600 below the low-income cut-off. Statistics Canada estimates that a single woman with two children, living in Toronto, needs to earn \$31,081 a year to lift her family out of poverty. At the current minimum wage she would have to work 68 hours a week to earn that much in a year.

Compare that to the earnings of Canada's best-paid CEOs. Starting the clock at midnight New Year's Eve, the CEO will have made as much as a full year's wages for a minimum wage earner by the afternoon of January 2nd.

Contrary to all the fear-mongering, raising the minimum wage would be good for the economy. In the UK the minimum wage is 5.35 Pounds an hour, in France it's 8.27 Euros an hour, in Australia it's 13.47 Australian dollars an hour, and in Ireland it's 7.65 Euros, all of which amount to at least \$11 Canadian. They all have strong economies and healthy job

creation. In 2004, Santa Fe, New Mexico, raised its minimum wage to \$8.50 US from \$5.15. In that year's Canadian dollars that's equivalent to raising the wage from \$7 to \$10. Despite big business fear-mongering, no retail jobs, fast food jobs or temp jobs were exported overseas. Two years later, employment had stayed the same or increased.

**Ask your Local Candidates:**

Do you support increasing the minimum wage to \$10 an hour immediately?

If not, why not?

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