

CLOSING THE VOICE GAP

A BETTER FUTURE FOR WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE
ONTARIO ASSEMBLY ON WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY

FINAL REPORT | DECEMBER 2022



**Ontario Assembly on
Workplace Democracy**

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REMARKS FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The benefits of “voice” in the workplace are significant, helping to improve the lives of workers, increase the bottom lines for firms, and enrich Canadian society as a whole. Yet, there is room to reimagine how Ontarians can share their concerns and contribute to problem-solving at work.

The Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy was premised on the idea that everyday Ontarians should be able to engage with this important issue.

Over five sessions that spanned three months, 32 Ontarians from all walks of life held frank, open, and in-depth discussions about their experiences voicing concerns at work. They learned about worker voice from a diverse set of experts and stakeholders, and refined their collective vision for improving worker voice for current and future generations.

We are delighted to share this report, which contains background information on the Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy, as well as conclusions and a comprehensive set of recommendations proposed by its members to reinvigorate and build on the current model of worker voice in Ontario.

Their work exemplifies constructive, compassionate, and courageous efforts to improve policy-making.

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On behalf of the entire project team, we would like to thank them for their service. We would also like to thank our dedicated project team, volunteer speakers and experts, as well as the generous funding provided by the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources (CIRHR) at the University of Toronto.

We hope that our initial foray into using Citizens' Assemblies to tackle the question of worker voice spurs further innovation in Canada and around the world. We have learned much from our experience, and we are excited to continue refining this approach in the coming years. We also hope readers of this report will find the members' work useful and inspiring.

Sincerely,



Rafael Gomez, Andrew Gibson, and Simon Pek
Steering Committee



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REMARKS
FROM MEMBERS

“As a woman in society, you don’t feel like you have much of a voice at times, so this is really an opportunity to speak out and have my voice count for something, [and] for my daughter to have a better working life than I did.”

—**Amanda Miller**, Kingston

“I’ve learned a lot from the other members, and heard a lot of different perspectives. Living in the great white north, it’s a bit of a bubble. I [didn’t] really understand and appreciate what some other people experience in their working life.”

—**Daniel Oliana**, Sault Ste. Marie

“I’m obviously not an expert in labour law, so listening to the speakers and fellow members was a great learning experience. With a lot of problems these days that seem so huge and overwhelming, it was great to engage on this issue in a way that felt meaningful and hopeful.”

—**Michelle Tien**, Mississauga



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“This was an opportunity to contribute some of my thoughts to the process, and a wonderful opportunity to learn and see where other people were coming from... It’s a living example that we all have the capacity to listen to each other, to respect each other, and learn how to understand each other, and that’s the essence of democracy... Even if we can’t come to total agreement on things, we can come to consensus, and that’s what I saw happening throughout this process: a meeting of the minds with a common purpose.”

—**Douglas Mutch**, *Ottawa*

“I hope that the recommendations made by the Assembly will help bring positive and effective change for more employees across the province, particularly vulnerable workers who may not have opportunities for their voices to be heard. This work has also encouraged me to think more carefully about the union I’m part of, and how I can involve myself more in the collective bargaining processes and work-related issues.”

—**Jennifer Sipos**, *Newmarket*

“I’ve worked in so many different sectors of the economy—I thought I’d seen and heard everything, but obviously not. I was very impressed by the common thread of this process; everyone was so intent on making things safer, better, and fairer for workers. We’ve got all these younger people coming up... I really hope we can make some positive change for these new workers, this younger generation, and I’m really looking forward to seeing some of these recommendations brought into law.”

—**Denise Choo-Son**, *Brampton*

“The greatest value was getting to be with fellow Canadians and Ontarians... The messaging we hear, both in news and media, seems very polarizing, but when you actually talk to people, it’s encouraging to hear that there’s this common thread: we want other people to succeed, and we want people to be safe in their workplaces. I feel very grateful to be part of this.”

—**Gillian Tait**, *Toronto*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**WHAT CITIZENS AND
POLICY-MAKERS SHOULD KNOW**

The Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy is a body of 32 Ontarians selected through a civic lottery, convened by the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, and representing the breadth and diversity of the province at large.

Meeting virtually via Zoom over five sessions totalling more than 26 hours, the members of the Assembly, all volunteers, have accepted the challenge of resolving a critical question for our society: How can workers in Ontario, wherever and however they are employed, have a "say" in workplace decisions in order to make their workplaces better, safer, fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable?

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the importance of working conditions in Ontario workplaces.



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Workers' ability to influence decision-making at work is not something many of us typically think about, but it can have major impacts on working conditions, workers' sense of self-worth, and their organizations' performance.

Yet, in recent decades, research has pointed to an important "Voice Gap" between workers' expected say in workplace decisions and their actual say. In other words, workers don't have as much say or influence on decisions and workplace outcomes as they believe they should. [1]

Part of the problem has to do with declining unionization in recent decades, and the lack of any robust alternatives for worker voice. [2] The impact is significant, as the problem of muted worker voice affects workplace productivity, wages and benefits, mental health, and a host of other critical factors. While different across various industries, sectors, and individual workplaces, the Voice Gap nevertheless affects all workers' abilities and rights to enjoy the best possible work environment.

So, how can Ontario workers use their voice in the workplace to influence decisions that affect them?

How can their voice be heard? The answers will have an impact not only in individual workplaces but across industries and our entire economy—and indeed our very democracy, for the more we participate and are heard in the places where we work, the stronger we make the civil society all around us.

This report and its recommendations should be read as a clarion call to elected representatives, government agencies, employers, union and labour leaders, and other stakeholders to meaningfully address the Voice Gap; that is, to improve the ability of workers to have a say in decisions and to influence important outcomes in their workplace, from issues of safety and productivity to wages and benefits, and many other critical outcomes.

[1] For Canadian data on the voice gap (also known as the representation gap), see Gomez and Gomez, "Workplace Democracy for the 21st Century" (Toronto: Broadbent Institute, 2016), pp. 43-46. For recent US data, see Kochan et al., "US Workers' Organizing Efforts and Collective Actions: A Review of the Current Landscape" (Worker Empowerment Research Network, 2022), pp. 8-13.

[2] Private-sector membership in labor unions, the most institutionalized form of worker voice, has seen a steady decline in recent decades, falling from a peak of near 30 per cent in the early 1980s to just under 15 percent today.

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With a mandate to share perspectives, listen to each other, sort through what Ontarians think about the problem, learn about important research in law and public policy, consider various options, weigh competing priorities, and ultimately issue recommendations, the representative members of the Ontario Assembly have drafted their report (pg. 19) to clarify the problem of the Voice Gap and suggest solutions. In other words, they have already done much of the heavy lifting—now it is up to leaders and policy-makers to take up these recommendations and do the work of applying them to their jurisdictions.

The members of the Assembly have worked together to identify common concerns (pg. 20), which their fellow Ontarians will recognize as barriers to exercising their voice in the workplace, and which include:

- A pervasive fear of repercussions or retaliation for speaking up at work;
- A perceived lack of accountability and follow-through on the part of managers or employers;
- The absence of structures in many workplaces for collaborative decision-making, including input from all workers;
- A lack of training and resources about how to exercise worker voice;
- The endurance of occupational health and safety (including mental health) concerns in the workplace, which remain significant constraints on worker voice.
- Systemic barriers faced by specific groups of workers, including women, people of colour, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and immigrants with language and cultural barriers.

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The members have articulated a set of common values that should underpin solutions to the problem of worker voice (pg. 23), and made 14 consensus recommendations for improving workplace democracy and strengthening worker voice in Ontario (pg. 27).

Specifically, the Assembly strongly believes that a comprehensive approach to addressing the problem of the Voice Gap in Ontario should include:

- Introducing legislation that allows for broader-based collective bargaining in the form of “public bargaining” through tripartite committees at the level of industry sectors.
- Providing powers to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to allow for the consolidation of bargaining units across numerous worksites under the same franchisor or corporately owned enterprise.
- Amending the *Labour Relations Act* to protect “concerted activity” among workers, defined as two or more co-workers coming together to talk about and/or advocate for changes in their workplace.
- Recognizing a new category of “Small Employee Association” in labour law that would have the right to meaningful dialogue with employers.
- Creating mandatory employee councils that would operate as a vehicle for communication between employees and employers.

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- Urging employer associations and chambers of commerce across Ontario to prioritize best practices for enhancing worker voice, such as quality circles, self-managed work teams, goal-setting committees, and peer review panels.
- Designing a “Worker Voice Index,” open to the public, to measure the level of worker voice in a given company.
- Encouraging unions to improve their participatory, accessibility, and financial processes to better support workers’ rights to use their voice and to strengthen union democracy.
- Recognizing gig workers’ right to form and join a union of their choosing and to have access to union protections, including the right to strike.
- Amending the *Employment Standards Act* to provide unjust dismissal protections for workers in Ontario, giving them greater confidence to safely voice their concerns.
- Expanding the regularization program for temporary foreign workers to ensure that all workers in Ontario receive equal labour rights and protections to those of permanent residents.



We invite you to read the profiles of each of the 32 Assembly members (pg. 37) to familiarize yourself with who they are, how they understood the problem of the Voice Gap, and what they recommend be done about it. You will also learn more about the Assembly’s selection process (pg. 12), demographics (pg. 13), activities (pg. 15), and the project team (pg. 56).

Taken together, the recommendations offered by the Assembly members can help ensure this province offers every worker, every resident, and every family a safe, secure, healthy, and vibrant place to work.

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UNDERSTANDING THE ASSEMBLY

THE ASSEMBLY'S MANDATE

The Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources (CIRHR) at the University of Toronto convened a special Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy to create recommendations for how the government and organizations can reimagine worker voice in Ontario. This Assembly was tasked with examining the current options available for workers to influence decisions in their workplaces, and identifying their shortcomings. They were asked to identify common concerns, to articulate a set of shared values that should underpin any solutions to the problem of the Voice Gap, to learn about and weigh various policy options, and to reach consensus on a set of recommendations for government, employers, unions, and other stakeholders to consider.

SELECTION PROCESS: THE CIVIC LOTTERY

The 32 members of the Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy were selected by Civic Lottery. In June 2022, a total of 12,500 invitations were sent to randomly selected households across Ontario. The letter invited recipients to volunteer their time to meet virtually via Zoom, share perspectives, learn about policy options, discuss, deliberate, and ultimately make recommendations to improve Worker Voice and Workplace Democracy in Ontario.

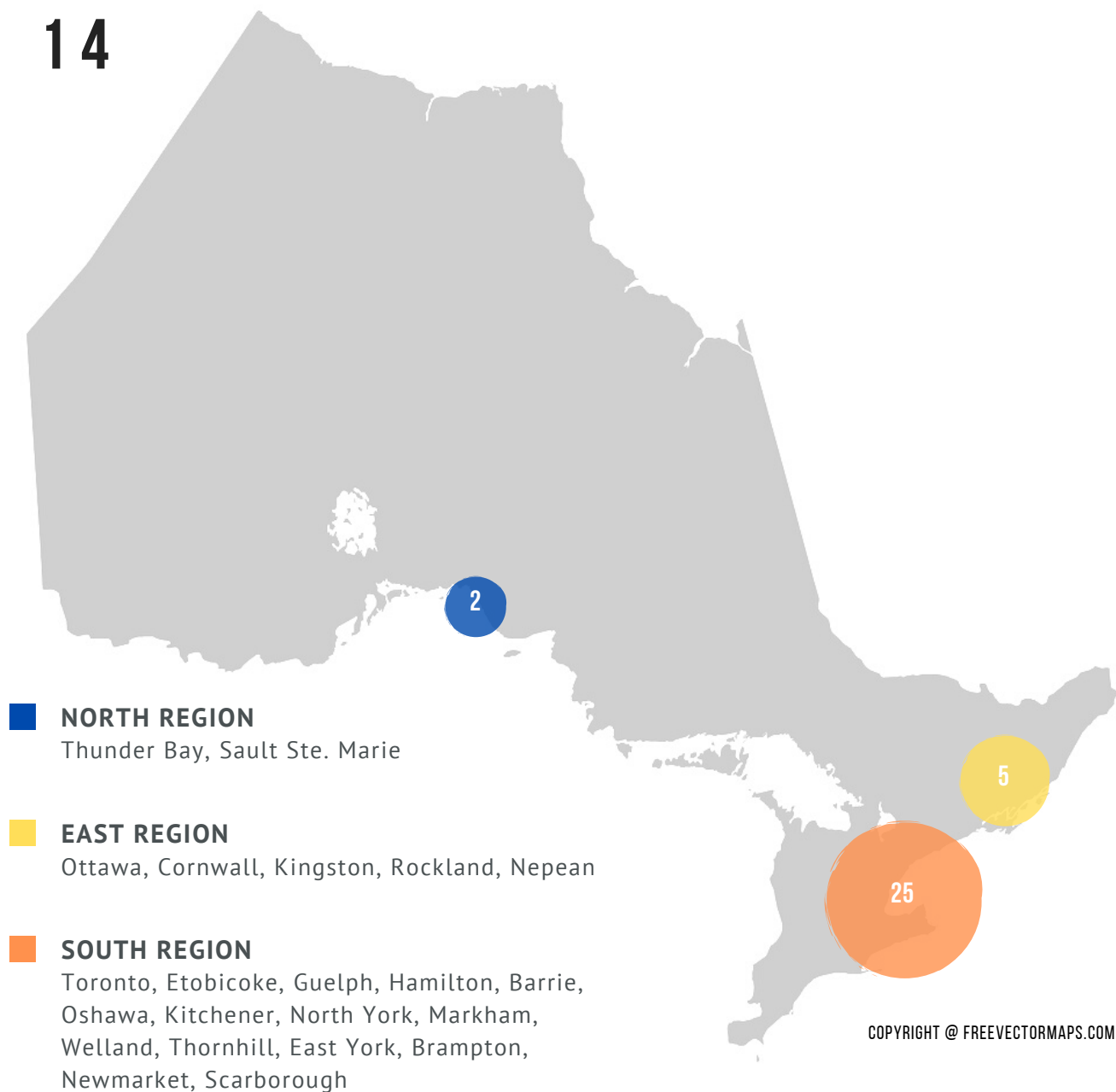


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More than 100 respondents volunteered for the Ontario Assembly, and from this pool of eligible volunteers, 36 were randomly selected in a blind draw that balanced the following criteria with respect to the overall population of working Ontarians: 1) gender (male/female parity, as well as non-binary representation); 2) age distribution; 3) geographic distribution (regional as well as urban/rural); 4) type of employment (private sector and public sector, union and non-union, working and not working or retired, secure and precarious employment); 5) ethnicity (racialized, white, or Indigenous); and 6) household income.



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After the Assembly began its work, four members declared they needed to withdraw, citing concerns with their ability to commit to the full schedule of sessions while balancing work, family, or other obligations. Ultimately the Assembly was composed of 32 members.

Each of these 32 Assembly members generously agreed to spend a minimum of 26.5 hours over five intensive evening and Saturday sessions to engage in four core activities:

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1) Meet and work together with fellow participants representing different walks of life and work experiences from across Ontario; 2) Learn from experts and researchers about the different options for promoting stronger and fairer decision-making in the workplace; 3) Understand the trade-offs and benefits—for both workers and employers—between different workplace arrangements and policy options; and, 4) Provide guidance, in the form of recommendations, on how governments and organizations can implement new and strengthen existing policies and institutions with the goal of increasing workers' influence on decision-making at work.



OVERVIEW OF THE ASSEMBLY'S ACTIVITIES

The Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy (OAWD) formally began on the evening of **Thursday, July 14, 2022**, with a two-and-a-half-hour orientation session that provided the members with an overview of the issue of Worker Voice, the mandate and processes of the Assembly, and the overall goals of their work together. Members also used this session to get to know one another as Assembly colleagues. Prior to the orientation session, each member had received a Welcome Package with information and an FAQ about the Assembly, and had completed a phone interview to introduce themselves to the project team.

On **Saturday, July 16**, the “learning” stage of the Assembly began with the first full-day session, lasting six hours. During Session 1, the members heard opening remarks from Lisa Raitt, former Member of Parliament representing the riding of Malton, and former federal Minister of Labour.

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They then attended presentations by experts, including professors Johanna Weststar of Western University's Department of management and organizational studies (on rebalancing the rules of workplace governance); Thomas Kochan of MIT's Sloan School of Management (on the changing nature of work); Cynthia Estlund of New York University's School of Law (on democratic entitlement at work); Meredith Woodwark of Wilfrid Laurier University (on job satisfaction and corporate performance); and Rafael Gomez of the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources (on civic participation beyond the workplace). Session 1 also served as the members' first discussion of the concerns they and their fellow Ontario workers share about these issues, and the values they hold in common regarding worker voice.

On **Friday, September 2**, the project team hosted a public virtual policy debate as part of the OAWD initiative. Moderated by Anil Verma of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, the debate saw employment and labour-law lawyers, Simran Prihar of Goldblatt Partners and Kathryn Marshall of Levitt Sheikh Law, advance and defend their best solutions for protecting workers' voices in the workplace. While participation by members was not mandatory, ten of them voluntarily attended, with others later watching the recording. The debate was followed by a lively question and answer period.

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The learning stage continued after a summer hiatus with Session 2, which was held on **Saturday, September 17**, again over six hours. Equipped with knowledge gained in the first session and Policy Debate, this session moved members into a “consulting” phase of the process. Following opening remarks from Anthony Giles, former Assistant Deputy Minister in Labour Program of Employment and Social Development Canada, the members were presented with a working list of policy options, which would form the basis of their subsequent deliberations and policy recommendations. These policy options were complemented by presentations by professors Sara Slinn of Osgoode Hall Law School (on broader-based bargaining), David Doorey of Osgoode Hall Law School (on minority unionism), and Roy Adams of the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University (on works councils). Later in the day, the members heard from and interacted with three stakeholders in the realm of strengthening worker voice: Angelo DiCaro, Director of Research at Unifor (on union perspectives), Deena Ladd, Executive Director of Workers Action Centre (on civil society organizations), and Lauren Tedesco, Senior Vice President of APMA (on employer perspectives).

Session 3, held on **Saturday, September 24**, marked the beginning of the Assembly’s “deliberation” stage. Opening remarks from union organizer Greta Whipple, an employee of a recently unionized Indigo bookstore, were followed by a presentation by Thomas Kohler of Boston College Law School (on international trends in Worker Voice) and an extensive question and answer period with four former presenters, from whom the members sought feedback and guidance on their consideration of the policy options.

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The members then formed themselves into six Working Groups, which were divided based on categories of policy options. These policy options fell under the following six categories: broader-based bargaining; non-majority forms of collective voice; corporate governance; what employers can do and how governments can support them; voice-enabling statutory changes; and improving union democracy. The members were given the opportunity to self-select into these groups based on interest, and spent the remainder of this session discussing a range of policy options, reflecting on what they had learned and their concerns and values, and forming preliminary recommendations.

On **Saturday, October 1**, Rohinton Medhora, economist and the former chair of the Ontario Workforce

Recovery Advisory Committee, provided opening remarks for the Assembly's fifth and final session. Over six hours on this final day, members continued their Working Group discussions and drafted their recommendations. After hours of hard work, the Assembly members presented their Draft Final Report, including recommendations, in plenary, with former minister Lisa Raitt and Assembly Chair Rafael Gomez in attendance. The Assembly then concluded with a presentation of certificates to members and a group reflection on the importance of the initiative they volunteered for. Following the final session, members were given the opportunity to reflect on and suggest final edits to the draft report, as well as submit a Minority Report to reflect any individual dissent from any of the consensus recommendations.



REPORT FROM THE ASSEMBLY

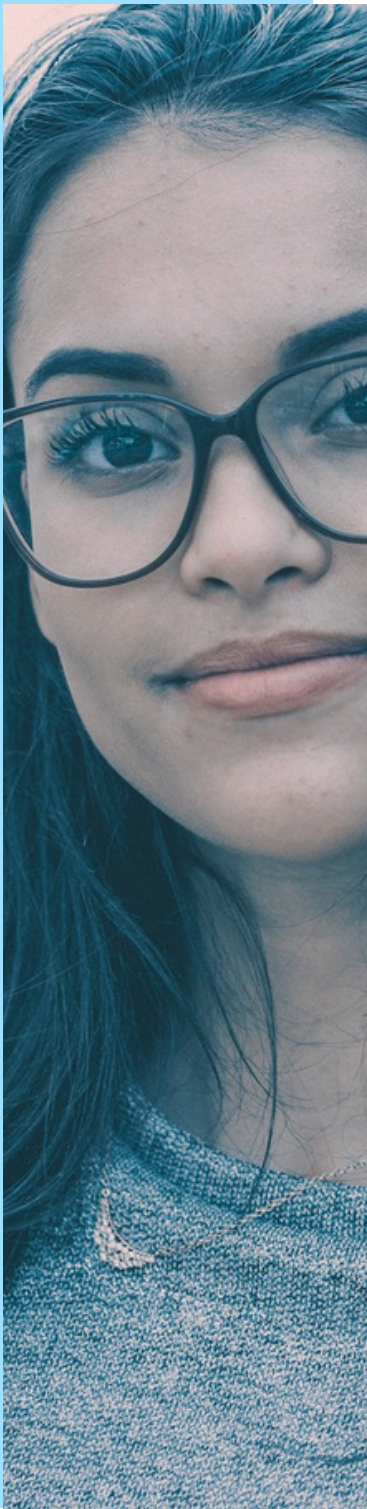
WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ACCEPTED THE CALL TO SERVE

We are a collective of 32 residents and workers from all across Ontario, from the Northwest to the Southeast, who volunteered for this Assembly because we care about and are affected by issues of Worker Voice.

As a representative sample of Ontarians, including new Canadians, we bring diverse perspectives and lived experiences as workers and residents, and come from many different backgrounds and identities.

We are union and non-union workers, retired workers and people not currently working—whether by choice or circumstance. Some of us currently have secure employment while others are among those Ontarians whose employment is precarious, including gig workers and the self-employed. We work in different industries and sectors, from the customer service sector to trades and professions, from entry-level to experienced, ranging across pay levels.

All of us have a personal stake in this issue, and we speak not just for ourselves but for our communities, neighbours, colleagues, and fellow Ontarians. In this Assembly, we've had the opportunity to have our voices heard, to share our experiences, to learn about the issues from different angles, to weigh various avenues and prioritize options, and ultimately to use our judgment to make recommendations to improve worker voice in this province.



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We are motivated not only by the importance of this issue but also a sense of civic duty, to give back to our communities, to learn, to represent others, and to empower others to be able to speak up in the workplace and be heard.

Our vision for worker voice in Ontario is one where workers have a variety of tools with which they can represent their interests - tools that are adaptable to different work environments. Our recommendations incorporate the diversity of workplaces and work situations.

We are asking all stakeholders—employers, governments, unions, the public—to listen to our voices and our recommendations, to meaningfully

improve the capacity of workers in Ontario to have a say in decision-making in their workplaces, and to bring greater dignity, fairness and collaboration to the future of work.

All of us have a personal stake in this issue, and we speak, not just for ourselves but for our communities, neighbours, colleagues, and fellow Ontarians. In this Assembly, we've had the opportunity to have our voices heard, to share our experiences, to learn about the issues from different angles, to weigh various avenues and prioritize options, and ultimately to use our judgment to make recommendations to improve worker voice in this province.

OUR CONCERNS

As members of the Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy, we have worked to find common ground on concerns around Worker Voice that are familiar to many Ontario workers. First by sharing and discussing our individual experiences of speaking up at work, and then by identifying key barriers to worker voice and gaps in existing workplace structures and systems, this Assembly has articulated a set of core concerns that must be addressed to bring satisfactory solutions to the issue of Worker Voice.

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When it comes to the capacity of workers to influence decision-making in the workplace and have a say in solving problems, we are concerned that:

- A.** Many Ontario workers do not exercise their voice in the workplace out of fear of repercussions or retaliation from employers. Workers who perceive a lack of protection around speaking up—because of job insecurity/precarity, being labelled as troublesome, causing “waves” in the workplace, or other consequences—are less likely to take initiative to use their voice.
- B.** Many Ontario workers perceive a lack of structural mechanisms and avenues to exercise their voice in the workplace, what experts refer to as a ‘voice gap’, and thus often feel they have nowhere to turn when they want to speak up. Workplace cultures that emphasize harmony and unanimity further discourage worker voice and stifle open communication. Additionally, fragmentation and lack of communication between teams or segments of workers often discourage information-sharing and speaking up.
- C.** Many Ontario workers lack the knowledge, training, and resources on how to exercise their voice in the workplace. This includes not only knowledge specific to individual workplaces and sectors but also worker rights with respect to labour codes, provincial and federal law, and even worker protections derived from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- D.** Many Ontario workers perceive a lack of accountability and transparency with respect to speaking up in the workplace or participating in existing mechanisms of worker voice. This includes a perception that management or employers are often unresponsive or dismissive of worker concerns and perspectives; a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities to follow through on issues raised by workers or commitments made to workers; and a feeling among workers that the exercise of their voice will not have an impact.



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- E.** While unions in both the public and private sector play an important role in protecting workers who exercise their voice and bargaining on behalf of workers for conditions that may improve or sustain worker voice, unions themselves may have improvements to make. Many unionized Ontario workers perceive that union structures and management sometimes ignore worker voice and stifle communication and dissent. This often causes resentment among workers and distrust in the processes of union elections, representation, and collective bargaining. Workers feel unions are losing strength and not representing workers' best interests. The authenticity of workers' voices in improving the conditions of their workplace is thereby compromised.
- F.** Despite the legal requirement to have a joint health and safety committee in many workplaces, occupational health and safety, including mental health, remains a paramount issue where Ontario workers feel frustrated about their lack of say in the workplace. Statistics point toward increasing strains on workers due to unsafe conditions that ultimately may lead to physical injury and mental anguish in the workplace, highlighting the urgent importance of empowering worker voice.
- G.** The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has increased the urgency for reform around worker voice, especially with regards to workers having input in decision-making around health and safety standards, wages, workplace flexibility, and protections for workers who are sick or need to care for others who are sick.
- H.** Many Ontario workers experience a lack of collaborative decision-making in the workplace, where input is sought from workers at all levels and where systems are in place, whether in union or non-union environments, for workers to have their interests represented fairly, respectfully, transparently, and with expectations for action.

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- I. Systemic barriers exist for Ontario workers who are women, indigenous peoples, people of colour, LGBTQ+, people who have physical and other disabilities, and immigrants/migrant workers with language and cultural barriers to exercise worker voice freely and without fear. This is especially true when workers from these groups wish to use their voice to initiate action or express concern about the discrimination—e.g. sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia—they face in the workplace. Workers who experience discrimination or marginalization in the workplace are less likely to speak up and to trust processes or mechanisms in place for exercising worker voice, even though employers have an obligation to the Ontario Human Rights Code which recognizes the inherent dignity and worth of every person and guarantees equal right and opportunities without discrimination.

**OUR VALUES**

As members of the Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy, we have worked together to identify the values we hold in common around Worker Voice, and which we believe are shared by all Ontario workers. These values have guided our work towards a focused and coherent package of proposals and recommendations around improving Worker Voice in Ontario. We believe these values should also guide legislators, regulators, academics, union and business leaders, and others in a position to create policies and systems to improve Worker Voice.

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When it comes to ensuring that workers have a voice in the workplace, we value:

Employer Success

Without employer success, workers may lose their employment if, for example, the enterprise is no longer financially sustainable. Workers can see where there are problems that can be improved. There are many examples where changes in management practices are required, prompted by feedback from workers, for the enterprise to be successful.

Accountability and Responsiveness

This includes both employers and workers taking responsibility for ensuring everyone in the workforce has the capacity to participate in workplace decision-making, with a spotlight on employers to take action, acknowledge and recognize the voice of workers, demonstrate an understanding of concerns by consulting, listen to different viewpoints, proactively involve workers and stakeholders and seeking feedback, and minimize blame. Responsiveness should include open communication, willingness to listen, and timely action. Action may include workplace evaluations, open town halls, task forces and committees, additional training, and expanding knowledge.

Respect, Kindness and Empathy

Respect in the workplace starts with employers listening to workers of diverse backgrounds without judgment or any preconceived notions, understanding and affirming the value that workers of all types (including volunteers) bring to the workplace, and keeping employees in mind when making decisions. Eliminating silos, fostering teamwork, and considering employees' healthy work-life balance all help fulfill this value.

Workplaces that emphasize respect, kindness and empathy among all workers and employers are more likely to be places where people will feel less stressed, less anxious, less exhausted and feel happier, more productive and satisfied in both their personal and occupational lives.

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Empowerment

Worker empowerment and clarity gives employees the tools to speak up and helps employers nurture their relationship with employees, allowing them to grow both personally and professionally. Employers who create safe spaces for workers to exercise their voice freely and participate in decision-making will build respectful and trusting environments where all workers can thrive. Worker empowerment and clarity can enhance employee commitment in the workplace and reduce conflict, build equality, and help achieve mutual goals.

Balancing Power

Balancing power between employers and workers ensures everyone is comfortable speaking up, and can do so in a way that creates meaningful change, for example, around issues such as pay and scheduling. Resolving issues when both parties—the employer, and employees—are on an equal playing field can create healthier and more trusting relationships among employers, peers and subordinates in the workplace that can lead to effective alliances.

Safety and Security

A working environment that is safe and comfortable is free from all forms of harassment and intimidation. This means that workers' personal safety will not be put at risk, and workers will have the ability to communicate potential risks in the context of their work duties and job security, including issues of mental health, work-life balance, and workers' personal wellbeing.

Education, Tools and Resources

New skills are needed by employers and employees to ensure intentional engagement and communication. For example, collaborative decision-making may be new within the workplace, or to some workers. Workers can't do much unless they are knowledgeable, properly trained, and have adequate access to all necessary resources to perform their job effectively. Further, continuous education is not only everyone's right, but plays an important role in worker health and safety, and improving the workplace. Workers require tools, access to information, support, flexibility and resources to learn and enhance their skills, and to excel meaningfully in their work.

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Equity and Inclusion

Embracing diversity in the workplace acknowledges our shared humanity and community. Inclusion not only applies to workers of diverse backgrounds and abilities, but also those with special needs, which must be acknowledged and accommodated in order for workplaces to truly value worker voice. Policies that ensure all workers have equal access to opportunities, to attain an optimal/healthy level of work and personal work-life balance, reduces disparities in the workplace.

Clarity, Transparency and Openness

Worker empowerment and clarity gives employees the tools to speak up and helps employers nurture their relationship with employees, allowing them to grow both personally and professionally. Employers who create safe spaces for workers to exercise their voice freely and participate in decision-making will build respectful and trusting environments where all workers can thrive. Worker empowerment and clarity can enhance employee commitment in the workplace and reduce conflict, build equality, and help achieve mutual goals.



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OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The set of recommendations below builds on what currently exists in labour and employment legislation in Ontario with regard to protected channels of worker voice, and also covers voluntary practices undertaken by employers on their own initiative.

The principal legislative channel of worker voice is the model of collective bargaining enshrined in the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*, 1995. Under this model, which is particular to North America, workers must organize for the support of over 50 percent of the workforce at their specific worksite in order to certify for unionization and to be able to bargain collectively with their employer. If they do not reach this threshold of support, their effective rights of freedom of association are close to nil—except for their ability to advocate for change through joint health and safety committees (mandated under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*), which are legally required in workplaces over 20 employees.



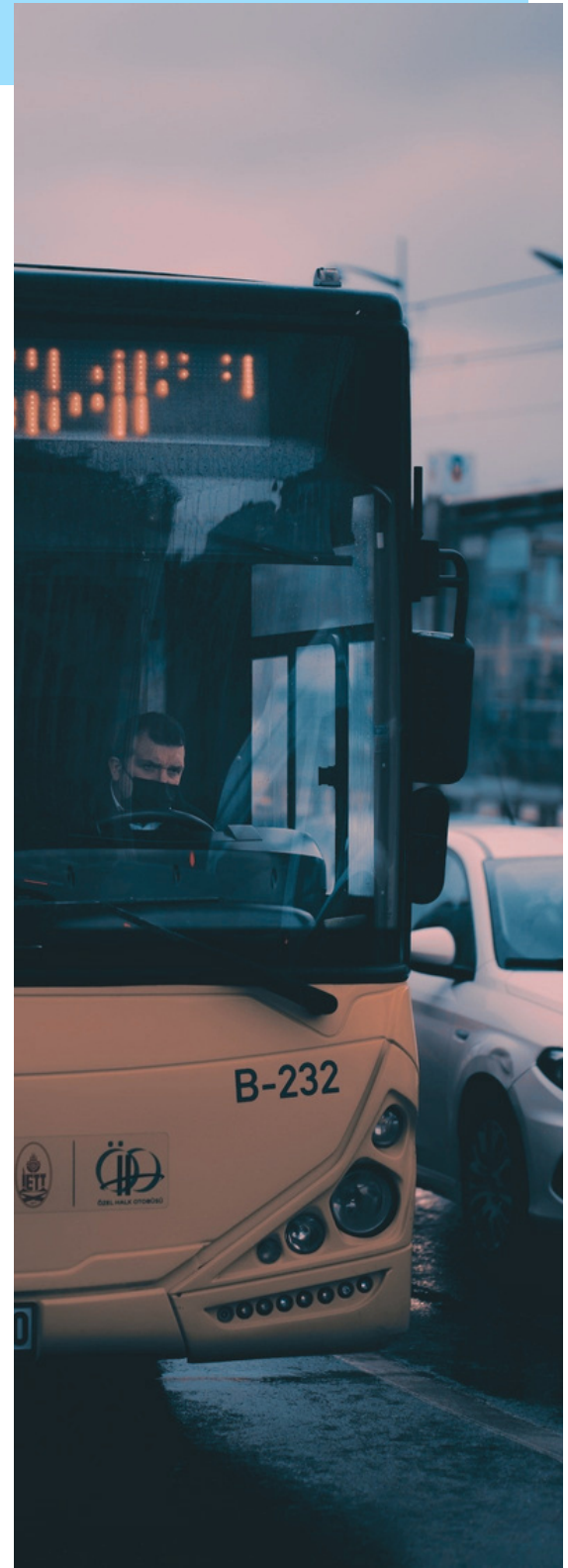
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A: BROADER-BASED BARGAINING

A1. We appeal to the Government of Ontario and the Minister of Labour to consider introducing legislation that allows for broader-based collective bargaining in the form of “public bargaining” through tripartite committees at the level of industry sectors.

This approach to collective bargaining would mandate the creation of tripartite administrative structures that include state agencies, representatives from worker organizations and business groups, who then negotiate over employment standards such as minimum wages, benefits, health and safety, and scheduling on an industry-by-industry basis. This approach would not preclude worksite bargaining. As a starting point, this model could be applied to sectors historically underrepresented by unions where there are many vulnerable workers in precarious low-paid work, such as the fast food sector.

Examples include California’s recently adopted *FAST Recovery Act* (AB 257, the *Fast Food Accountability and Standards Recovery Act*), which would establish a 10-member council that includes political appointees from state health and labor agencies, as well as food industry officials, fast food workers, and union representatives. The council is mandated with proposing minimum standards for things like wages and working conditions for restaurants where workers aren’t unionized.



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A2. We appeal to the Government of Ontario and the Minister of Labour to amend the *Labour Relations Act* (1995) to provide for broader-based collective bargaining by allowing for the consolidation of bargaining units across numerous worksites under the same franchisor or corporately owned enterprise.

This approach to collective bargaining would provide the Ontario Labour Relations Board with the power to 1) require bargaining units of different franchisees of the same franchisor and represented by the same union to bargain together centrally and 2) consolidate existing and/or newly certified bargaining units involving the same employer and union.

These enterprises could include, but are not limited to, those in the fast food sector, hospitality sector, and retail sector. This model could be restricted to specific geographic area, or be applied more broadly across Ontario.

B: NON-MAJORITY FORMS OF COLLECTIVE VOICE

B1. We appeal to the Government of Ontario and the Minister of Labour to consider introducing legislation that protects “concerted activity” among workers, defined as when two or more coworkers come together to talk about and/or advocate for changes in their workplace.

This legislation would protect all workers (independent contract workers, guest workers, unionized and non-unionized full-time and part-time) from being fired for talking about working conditions and salaries, or airing collective grievances regarding management and administration. This law would also apply to the digital space: workers would be protected when undertaking such actions online or on social media.

Examples of this type of protection for collective voice includes Section 7 of the *National Labor Relations Act* in the United States, although this legislation is restricted to “employees.”

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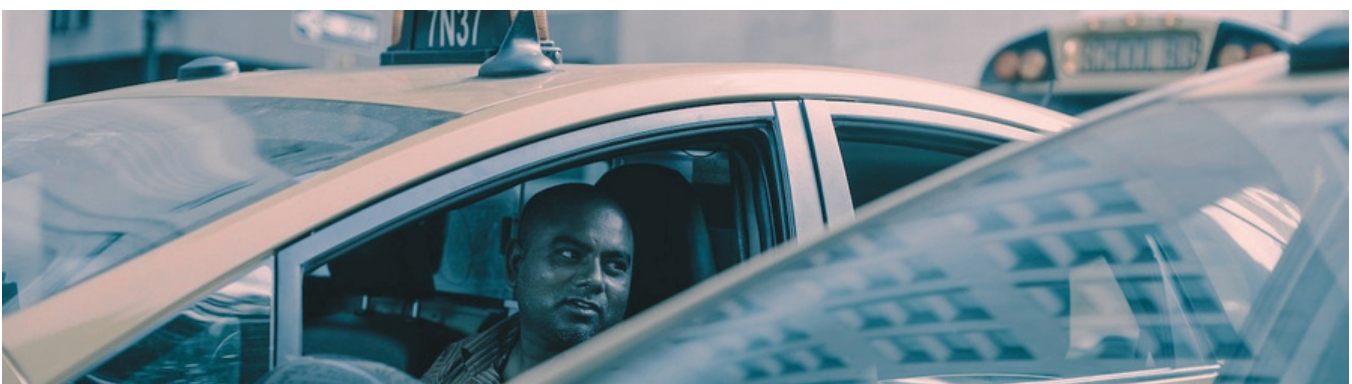
B2. We appeal to the Government of Ontario and the Minister of Labour to consider introducing legislation to recognize a new category of “Small Employee Association” in labour law that would have the right to meaningful dialogue with employers.

Specifically, we recommend the creation of Small Employee Associations to better capture unheard worker voices and engage in “meaningful dialogue” with employers, as defined by the 2015 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Fraser v. Canada*.

The formation of Small Employee Associations would require 25 percent support from workers in enterprises over a certain size (for example, 20 or more employees). These associations would not have the same rights as unions who are formed with over 50 percent support of employees (majoritarian, exclusive model)—specifically, these associations would not have the right to strike.

However, they would be guaranteed the right of expression, to advocate for improved labour conditions and to signal violations of minimum standards, such as violations of the *Employment Standards Act* or *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. They would also have the ability to raise voluntary funds for legal aid purposes.

Examples related to this type of approach to collective voice include the unfair labour practice provisions found in the Ontario Agricultural Employees Protection Act. This legislation provides agricultural employees with rights to establish, join and maintain “employees’ associations,” defined broadly as “associations of employees formed for the purpose of acting in concert.” However, as noted, the above recommendation (B2) would also include a right to meaningful dialogue with employers.



31

C: CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

C1. We appeal to the Government of Ontario and the Minister of Labour to consider introducing legislation for the creation of mandatory employee councils that would operate as a vehicle for communication between employees and employers on topics that include but are not limited to workplace training, employment equity, technological change, job sharing and the terms of plant shutdowns, and to cooperate with management in improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the enterprise.

Employee councils would be similar to joint health and safety committees in their functionality (required under Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*), but with the important difference that they would consist only of employees. Representatives of the council would be elected by other employees and would be scheduled to meet with management a minimum number of times (for example, on a quarterly basis).

The council must have a consistent and ongoing feedback loop between employers and employees. Employers must acknowledge reports from the council and respond to action items before the next scheduled council meeting. The legislation should take into account the means by which dialogue in good faith between the parties can be maintained; for example, impasses could be made arbitrable.

The legislation should include recognition that the employee councils are distinct from unions, but by no means mutually exclusive. It is expected that the councils may be more effective at dealing with individual grievances.

C2. Pending a legislative initiative by the Government of Ontario (C1), we call upon medium to large-size employers across Ontario to voluntarily incorporate employee councils into their labour-management model, such as already exists in certain high performing enterprises.

In addition, we call upon future leaders of said employee councils to 1) engage with the employer in good faith and 2) ensure that employee issues are appropriately heard and engaged with in confidentiality, trust and respect.

32

D: WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO AND HOW STAKEHOLDERSE CAN SUPPORT THEM

D1. We encourage all employer associations and chambers of commerce across Ontario to prioritize best practices for enhancing worker voice, such as creating regular opportunities for workers to offer feedback and to propose changes in the workplace.

Channels of worker voice may take many forms, including quality circles, self-managed work teams, goal-setting committees, peer review panels, and many other possible arrangements. Employers should encourage collaboration between workers and value teamwork by creating a positive environment, better incentive systems and specific collaboration on key performance indicators.

Workers should be rewarded for proposing improvements that benefit their team, small group or department within a company. They should be rewarded for performance improvements achieved through employer-employee collaboration. And they should be able to speak up without fear of repercussions, including the possibility to do so anonymously. Employers should implement structures that allow for employees to safely voice their concerns.

D2. We recommend that government representatives, academics, employers, and worker representatives collaborate to design a Worker Voice Index, open to the public, to measure the level of worker voice in a given company.

All stakeholders should be prepared for the digital transformation of the workplace. It is paramount that digital technology is used to enhance worker voice, as opposed to facilitating employee monitoring, that it is inclusive and protects minorities.

The Worker Voice Index would work as an employer's "credit score"; that is, an incentive for employers to engage in best practices. It should be based on a combination of the evaluation of workers, customers, suppliers, government(s), and other stakeholders. The Worker Voice Index must be i) government-sponsored to maintain/guarantee integrity; and ii) Designed to make companies with higher scores more attractive to workers and customers, in comparison with those with lower scores and less desirable work environments.

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D3. We urge employers and government representatives to apply/reinforce the already existing statutes and regulations, including the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in the workplace.

Government should introduce mandatory training and up-to-date certification for workers in supervisory positions to enable them to deliver their job in accordance with Canadian standards and laws already in place. When both employers and workers fully understand their rights and responsibilities, worker voice is protected, productivity improves, the economy is stronger, and workers' well-being is guaranteed.

E: IMPROVING UNION DEMOCRACY

E1. We encourage unions to make themselves as financially transparent as possible, for example by publishing a yearly financial audit, overseen by a financial oversight committee.

Unions should also acknowledge that they currently have an unfavourable image because, historically, large employers have tended to malign unions and unions continue to be maligned. Unions need to ensure the highest standards possible of democracy within their organizations.

Beyond financial transparency, unions should seek to provide increasingly diverse opportunities for members to speak out and participate in union initiatives and campaigns, including for racial minorities and people with disabilities. More specifically, unions should promote participation in leadership roles for people with disabilities and minorities.



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E2. We encourage union federations to work with their components to provide more accessible information to union members and non-members about worker rights.

This would include more opportunities, in more languages, for immigrant workers to learn about their collective agreement (if applicable), the work environment more generally, and their rights to collective voice. This would also include making this information accessible online and via a hotline where workers can access a consultant to help them understand a problem and how to pursue a resolution.

F: VOICE-ENABLING STATUTORY CHANGES

F1. We appeal to the federal government to consider expanding the regularization program for temporary foreign workers, beyond asylum seekers who work in the health sector, to ensure that all workers in Ontario receive equal labour rights and protections to those of permanent residents.

Such expansions would permit undocumented working persons and international students working in Ontario to advocate for better work, study, and living conditions—without fear of losing their jobs and being deported—in addition to having access to universal healthcare.

F2. We appeal to the Government of Ontario and the Minister of Labour to consider amending legislation to recognize gig workers' right to form and join a union of their choosing and to have access to union protections, including collective bargaining and the right to strike.

Building on recent legislation in Ontario (*Digital Platform Workers' Right Act*), the government should continue to monitor the working conditions and compensation packages available to gig workers. These workers should have the right to negotiate for livable wages and benefits with their employer, even if this is a digital platform enterprise.

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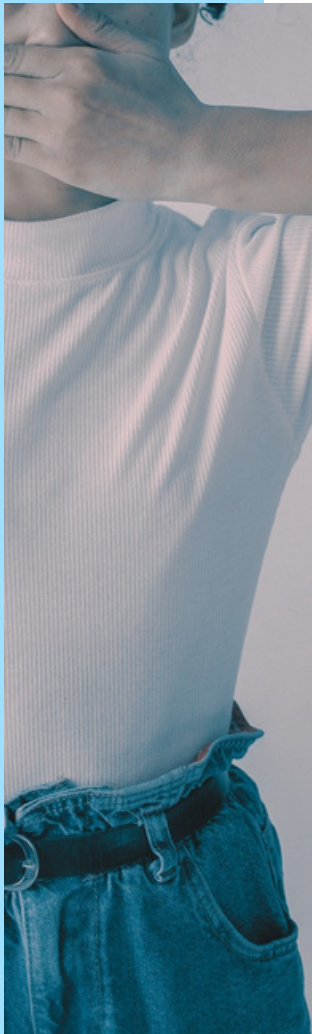
F3. We appeal to the Government of Ontario and the Minister of Labour to amend the Employment Standards Act to provide unjust dismissal protections for workers in Ontario, giving them greater confidence to voice their concerns.

In order for this change to enable a more confident manifestation of worker voice, the minimum service requirement before an employee has access to such protections should be no more than three months. Such protections should include the “make whole” remedies where an employee has been unjustly dismissed, including reinstatement of the employee.

A probationary period for employers of at least one year should also be applied, where if an employer wishes to again dismiss an employee who has been reinstated, the employer must show just cause prior to initiating any dismissal activity. This is to prevent an employer from pursuing retaliatory actions should an employee be reinstated into the workplace after initially being dismissed without cause.

Should an employer engage in unjust dismissal three times within a given period, the employer should be subject to disciplinary action, such as compulsory fines and mandatory training.





APPENDICES

MINORITY REPORTS

Minority reports do not represent a consensus view, but the perspective of one or more named members of the Assembly.

“I would like this report to acknowledge that many employers do not consider their profitability as having an upward limit, and this notion of profitability as limitless impacts worker voice. It impacts workers’ abilities to make and enjoy needed changes in their workplaces.”

—**Matt Tallon**, *Thunder Bay*

“I would like this report to acknowledge that, regarding voice-enabling statutory changes to improve worker voice, it would be beneficial for the Provincial government to consider introducing legislation to facilitate immigrants’ and religious minorities’ observation of religious holidays, and to limit the circumstances in which employees are forced to use their accrued leave (vacation time or unpaid

leave) to celebrate these holidays and festivals, which can also be disruptive to their employers. Observing non-statutory religious holidays can cost workers up to a third of their accrued leave, which is essential for them as they need leave to take care of their families’ basic needs. Many immigrants are even choosing to work on the eve of their festivals to preserve their leave. This recommendation is particularly important in the context of the government’s inclination towards making our society more diverse and workforce more democratic.”

—**Mohammed Ameruddin Azhar**, *Scarborough*

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MEMBER PROFILES

The 32 members of the Ontario Assembly provided brief profiles so that their fellow Ontarians may get to know them and their reasons for serving. (One member requested not to be identified publicly, thus 31 members are included below.)

Gabriella Amaral, Brampton

I have lived in Brampton for 40 years. I was born in the Azores in Portugal and my family immigrated to Canada when I was nine. I enjoyed travelling before Covid hit; in 2019, I visited Portugal and Cuba. I am a health information specialist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and have worked this job for over 40 years—a lifer! I should have retired but I continued working from home due to training difficulties during the pandemic. I work full-time, and I am unionized. I feel lucky to work at CAMH where we have staff-friendly policies in place and lots of learning opportunities. I feel employers must support their staff to be productive and happy and involve them in actual decision making, not just on paper. I volunteered for the Assembly from a sense of civic duty and to expose myself to new ideas. I am also hoping to contribute and make a difference based on everything I have observed during my long career in mental health.

Mohammed Ameruddin Azhar, Scarborough

I moved to Scarborough eight years ago from Halifax and have lived here since. I like how everything here is walkable. I am a synthetic chemist by profession with a PhD. My job is to make small molecules and use chemistry to solve practical problems. I'm on parental leave right now for our fourth child, and having that extra time to volunteer is what compelled me to join the Assembly. I've also long been interested in the management side of things and have had some previous training in business. So understanding this concept of workplace democracy and how workers can find new opportunities to grow is very interesting to me. I think it could be useful in my workplace. As an employee, I know the importance of fair treatment and having the opportunity to share ideas without fear of discrimination. I come to this Assembly hoping to learn, observe, be open-minded, and take in what the experts say. When I'm not working, I love to take my kids to the splash pad and watch them play. It's important for me to spend this precious time with them and also support my wife, who is taking some training courses to improve her skills.

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Lynn Axford, Nepean

I live in Nepean, which since amalgamation is a part of the City of Ottawa. I love living in this neighbourhood because it's very diverse and has a student vibe with Algonquin College close by. In my spare time, I really enjoy botanical drawing and photography, and recently bought a new digital camera. One of my sons works at a restaurant, and together we enjoy checking out new spots to eat in the city. During my long career, I've worked in many different organizations, and have been with the federal government for almost twenty years. Right now, I'm an analyst with Global Affairs Canada. When I received the invitation to participate in this Assembly, I was immediately interested. We've had to make enormous changes to our workplace because of Covid, and remote work has created special challenges for those of us who work with sensitive documents. But even beyond my own work, I have recognized that lots of people are feeling really overworked these days, and I've seen a lot of people leave our department or the field altogether because of it. I'm at that stage of my career where I want to be of service to others and be more active, to stand up for those who are overworked, so I feel this is a great opportunity for me to learn and get more involved. My time as a worker may be coming to a close, but I'm really concerned about my sons and their generation, for their rights as workers and also for women's rights in the workplace.

Denise Choo-Son, Brampton

I lived and worked for most of my life in Toronto as an accountant and retired to Brampton where spend most of my time gardening and volunteering with animal rescues. My very long work life spanned a wide cross section of industries, both public and private, in sectors ranging from non profits and health care to retail, wholesale and financial services. In my experience I have observed that many employers, especially private ones, lack the appetite for change. My other observations have been that the workplaces with any kind of positive energy were directly correlated with the amount of willingness on the part of management to listen, train, and support their staff. It is therefore crucial that all workers are given the necessary tools and learn how to use them to meet the challenges of changing working environments. So when I got the invitation for the Assembly, I felt I could share some of my experiences and make a contribution to this topic. I expect that our shared experiences and work on the Assembly will bring about changes that will improve the work lives of the younger generation and new workers so they are empowered to better maneuver and make positive contributions to their workplaces.

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Anthony Douglas, Cornwall

I grew up in Ottawa and now live in Cornwall. I previously worked as a CNC machinist and software designer. Now I'm self-employed and trying to start my own business centered on energy-efficient technologies. I've never been a member of a union but I participated in the Occupy Ottawa movement, which got me interested in activism. As a member of the Assembly, I am eager to get to know people and have some interesting conversations. I'm a little unsure about how big a difference we can actually make, because I'm generally of the opinion that employers and government are on the same side. Still, I hope we can use this opportunity to help create more favourable working conditions for young workers joining the labour force.



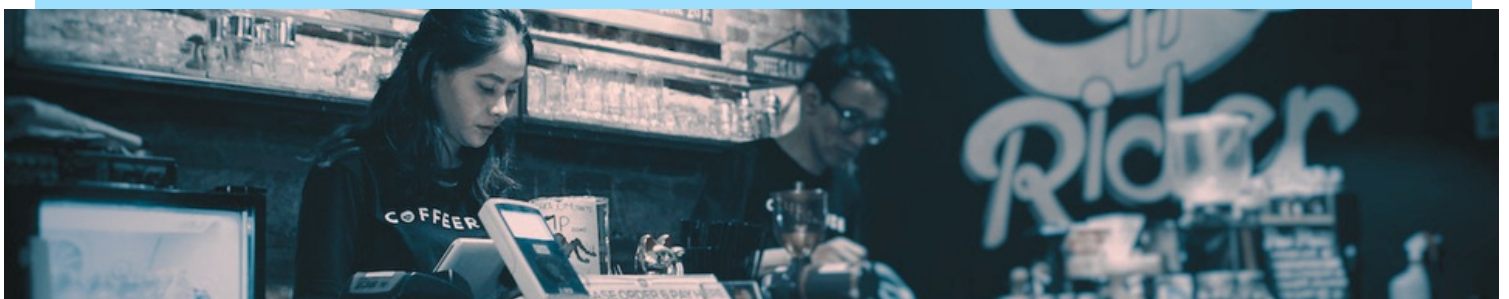
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Elaine Duffy, Toronto

I was born and raised in Ireland and spent college semesters in France and the Netherlands. I moved to Canada in 2012. My home right now is downtown Toronto. I have spent the last eight years working in insurance. Travel is my biggest passion, but I also enjoy good books, history, films, and spending time with family. I'm someone who has witnessed the power of citizens' assemblies back in Ireland, where these processes have time and again driven real change. I'm hoping this Assembly can help to open up important lines of discussion, achieve compromise, and generate thoughtful recommendations that can transform our world of work for the better. I believe being open to different perspectives always leads to better outcomes, including in the workplace. I strongly believe that people have the capacity to put personal biases aside to work towards the common good, and citizens' assemblies provide a platform for this work.

Sandra Evans, Barrie

I'm originally from Pickering, but Barrie is my hometown now and I've lived here for many years. I've been a public health nurse pretty much my whole life, but I recently decided to leave the field and pursue a master's degree in public health administration. I'm focusing on urban sustainability, because I strongly believe we need to be doing more in the healthcare field and in wider society to align our practices with the fight against climate change. When I'm not busy with work or studies, I love reading a good book and tending to my garden, which is full of vegetables and herbs this time of the year. I decided to join the Assembly because I'm very curious about what working environments are like in other sectors besides health care, and I want to learn from other perspectives and experts and put that knowledge under my belt. In my experience, there's not a lot of democracy in the workplace, and I've never really felt like I had a "worker voice." I hope to be a part of ending biases in the workplace, whether based on gender, ethnicity, seniority, or others, and I think this Assembly will be a great place to start.



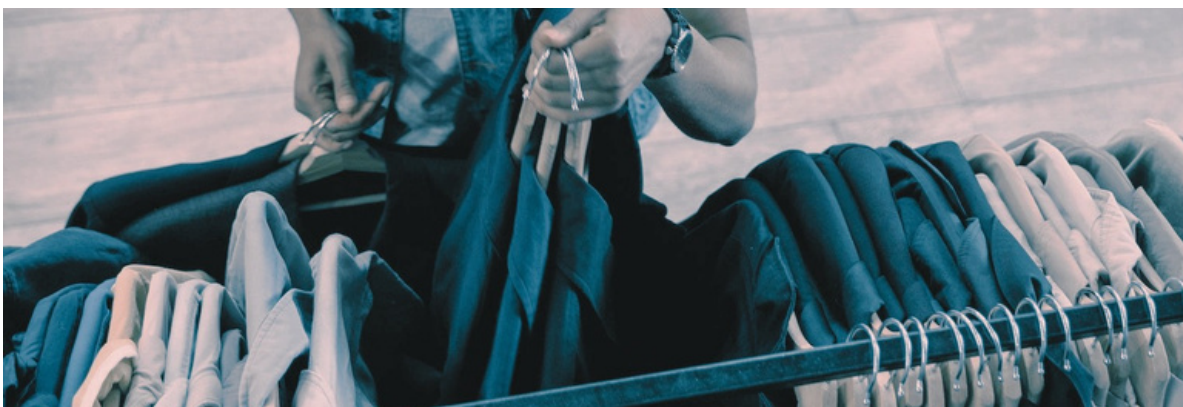
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Dandi Feng, North York

I have lived in Toronto since 2013. Earlier, I lived in the small town of Brockville in eastern Ontario. I enjoy art and the outdoors, especially rock-climbing. As a female East Asian working professional in my twenties, volunteering for the Assembly feels very necessary for my personal growth. First, I belong to a demographic that is severely underrepresented in politics, so I want to take this opportunity to represent my community and have a say in decision-making. Second, I belong to the generation that feels stretched beyond their capacity when it comes to work. In addition to my full-time job in tech, I have part-time side jobs, so all in all I work more hours than should be required. I expect my time in the Assembly to be full of important discussions and a chance to represent my fellow Ontarians. I would also like to stay informed of what comes out of our work together and how it affects real-world policy.

Dennis Jones, Thornhill

I grew up during the Second World War years. My parents were second-generation immigrants with little education but a strong willingness to work hard and provide for me and my two sisters. After high school, I worked in a pulp mill for five years, which allowed me to complete my engineering degree. I started by working at the Polysar plant in Sarnia, and a year later ran a polystyrene plant where most of my work was with union employees. I then designed a plant to make foamable polystyrene, before moving to Toronto to work in a private company making mixing equipment. No union there but we had a great group of people with excellent communication. When the plant shut down following an American buyout, we took over the sales and marketing of their products in Ontario and began a new company, which still exists to this day. So my long career allowed me to don multiple hats—employee as well as owner, some with unions and some without unions. I believe this experience will add a lot of value to the Assembly on Workplace Democracy, and that's why I volunteered.



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Tracy Letts, Mississauga

I was born and raised in North Bay, but my home for most of the past twenty years has been Mississauga, which is a beautiful place to be, especially down by the waterfront in Port Credit where they have lots of festivals in summer. The parks and bays around this part of Lake Ontario are a great place to learn paddle-boarding, which I absolutely love to do. I graduated from York University –my son was in daycare there when I was a student, and now he’s a student at York, too! I work as an educational assistant at a high school, helping students with autism thrive in the classroom environment. The goal is to make children with autism feel a part of the regular classroom, and my job is a success when no one knows exactly which children I’m there to support. I’ve grown a lot in my job since I started in 2005, but I sense that the school system has not. I realized early in my career that I had to advocate for myself to find my way, and was fortunate to find a school near me that needed my skills. Workplace democracy is important to me because educational assistants often work with the most aggressive students and have one of the highest rates of being injured at work, yet we are always last in line when it comes to bargaining and have among the lowest salaries. I joined this Assembly so I can take my learning back to my school and my union, and help improve my workplace and support fellow workers.

Hanna Lim, Etobicoke

My home is in Etobicoke, where I’ve lived for several years. I love all the parks and green spaces here. I enjoy kayaking on the Humber river in my spare time and I’m also excited to join a choir this fall! I’m fairly new to my career, having graduated just last year. I work as a paralegal for a Toronto law firm. Before that I worked all kinds of part-time jobs—serving, bartending, sales, almost anything you can imagine—so I’ve seen a lot of workplaces over the years. I volunteered for the Assembly because I think this is an opportunity to learn something new. There’s so much going on in the world, and it can be hard to find time to learn new things, but this struck me as really important. In my experience a lot of workers aren’t aware of their rights, especially in terms of what they can do when faced with harassment or violence in the workplace. It seems more important than ever to have all the essential information. I expect to learn a lot, exchange ideas and listen to others’ perspectives, and come away with a better understanding of workplace rights and strategies.

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Israel A. Makindipe, Toronto

I live near the Cabbagetown area of Toronto, but I was born and raised in Nigeria. I am an actor, with my most recent work being on *The Horrors of Dolores Roach*. My whole life, I have committed myself to learning. I also hold my Christian faith very dear and I respect all spirituality. My interest in the Assembly comes from my involvement with my community. I think that when mighty people gather, great ideas emerge, and that piqued my interest in the Assembly. I have been thinking of the concept of workplace democracy for some time, so receiving the letter to participate in the Assembly was perfect. I have worked in manufacturing in the past, including Cadbury, so I know about quality control in the private sector, and I think that kind of quality control can transfer to the public sector too. In my profession now, ACTRA is responsible for ensuring that employment standards are met on movie and television sets. I would like to see similar standards in the public sector. We must move towards actualizing the standards that we discuss for employees. We have buyers' protection when we buy products; why do we not have similar protections for workers? These are all topics that I hope to discuss during the Assembly.

*Fatima Mamache, Scarborough*

I grew up in Mississauga and now live in Scarborough. In my spare time, I like to hang out with friends, doodle, and go for walks. I am not fond of the 9-to-5 job idea. I think employees are more empowered when given the flexibility to decide their own hours. I recently began working full-time as a tour guide, which is interesting but also has its own set of issues like being exposed to pollution. I feel the Assembly is a good opportunity to bring such issues to light. I expect our work will help generate proper solutions to employee concerns, because there is no point in discussing our experiences if nothing concrete comes out of it. Workers form the backbone of every company. They are the ones who actually provide the goods and services, so their voices matter. If workers are not mentally and physically well enough to do their jobs, companies cannot keep running profitably.

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Mark Mihailov, Kitchener

I grew up and live in Kitchener. I work as a mechanical designer and technologist in the manufacturing industry and spend a lot of time in factories. I also did some part-time retail and restaurant work in my teens. I have a creative mindset and a problem-solving personality. For fun, I like to curl. The main reason I volunteered is to learn more about this Assembly process and understand how a small group of citizen volunteers can influence important decisions. Workers are the backbone of society and they generate all the goods and services we use. It is crucial that workers are compensated fairly, treated well, and provided with benefits.

Amanda Miller, Kingston

I grew up in several places, but spent the bulk of my time living in Scarborough, Ontario. I now live in Kingston and love it here! I am a single mother working full-time at Canada Post for the last 21 years. I love reading and walking my dogs, but it's gardening that de-stresses me the most. I have worked all my life—as a babysitter, pool attendant, and even at Wonderland when it first opened! Being a woman and a single parent, I've always been concerned about the state of workers, especially those in hazardous jobs like construction. To grow as a country, Canada must make these jobs monetarily enticing and beneficial. All workers should have access to sick leave and wages that are in line with the rising costs of living. I feel the Assembly is a great way to engage fellow Ontarians in these issues. We need more such opportunities for citizens to have a say in decisions that impact how they live and work. I hope our recommendations can help shape a framework for the evolution of work in Ontario and bring in positive changes to Canada's labour code.



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Douglas Mutch, Ottawa

Born in Toronto in 1949, I spent my early years in Sudbury before moving to Montreal in 1961. For the last 20 years, I have lived in Ottawa. I am a trained economist and spent most of my professional life in agriculture, working on market and policy analysis. My summers during university were spent as a labourer-teacher for Frontier College, two at gold mines and one at a lumber camp, working as a labourer and teaching literacy to my fellow workers after work. After graduation, I lectured at McGill and wrote columns for the Montreal Gazette and the Financial Times. I then got into consulting, which led to economist roles with the federal government, mainly at an agricultural Crown corporation and subsequently in the grain industry. Around the turn of the century, I decided I needed a change, and pivoted to more social-type work: volunteering to mentor people on how to develop healthy relationships with themselves and others. In addition to my life coaching work, I also facilitate a meeting every Friday morning for older gentlemen, where we try to solve the problems of the world, a tradition that was started in conjunction with my father and which I am proud to continue. I believe that what you get out of work and life is what you put into it. Each and every human being has a voice. All of us have a right to use our voice: at work, at home, in society. To be a healthy human being, we need to be able to express that voice and to hear the voices of others. Circumstances dictate what that voice means, but it is to all of our benefit to use our voice. My openness to listen, understand, and to respect others is a great asset of mine, and I am really looking forward to the Assembly.

Abel Okalla, Oshawa

I grew up in Nigeria and worked in Antigua in the West Indies before coming to Canada. I now live in Oshawa and work full-time for a food company. I enjoy watching soccer in my free time. When I graduated and joined the workforce in Nigeria, I struggled to find work-life balance. Things were worse in the Caribbean, where I had to work two jobs to survive. I came to Canada thinking the situation would be better here, but in many ways it is more challenging. I feel that capitalism is increasingly going against the welfare of workers, who are too reluctant to speak up for fear of retaliation from management. Workers are the engine that drives businesses, so they deserve better treatment, working conditions, and remuneration. By participating in the Assembly, I hope to give voice to workers' issues and highlight the need to reward them for their contribution. I am excited about the opportunity to meet my fellow Ontarians and hear their perspectives and experiences.

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Daniel Oliana, Sault Ste. Marie

I was born, raised and still live in Sault Ste. Marie. In my spare time, I enjoy genealogy, archery, reading, and travel. I set up my own consulting business last year which is focused on maintenance and asset management best practices, and one of the important tenets of that is employee engagement. Before that, I spent 45 years working in diverse roles in different companies. I started off in design, then got into maintenance systems, and finally landed a corporate role overseeing maintenance practices across nine facilities across the United States and Canada. I have worked in companies where I had very little autonomy and in eye-opening team-based environments where I could influence important decisions. By joining the Assembly, I wish to not only share my insight, but also listen to other people's experiences, both from the employee and employer sides. I feel it is important for workers to have a say because they are the ones deeply entrenched in operations, who can identify opportunities and offer solutions. I feel that corporations and managers are losing sight of that.

Stephen Pawlowski, Toronto

I'm a lifelong Toronto resident. I'm now a retiree, though I could still work and would like an opportunity. My working years were spent at many different workplaces in many different roles, some unionized and some not. I started off at 19 at Newsweb Enterprises, which printed the Toronto Sun, then worked as a switch operator in the railroad, as an engineer at the Ontario Hydro Bruce Nuclear power plant, as a rigger for container ships, then at the Maple Leaf oil refinery till it shut down. I also worked on and off in garages, where I liked working with cars and rebuilding engines. I volunteered for the Assembly because I like to help people, and also because I hope something positive comes out of the process for me. A big problem I see here in Canada is that manufacturing jobs are vastly overlooked. We export all our raw materials, but don't make things here. Even the machinery we use in factories is made in other countries, so maintenance and repairs are expensive and often delayed, putting employees at the risk of injury.



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Igor Perebeinos, North York

I have lived in Canada for over ten years, and I grew up in Russia. My main hobby is playing the piano. I am super into classical music and sometimes even work out to Chopin! I would also describe myself as a lifelong learner. I'm currently enrolled in a part-time accounting course online which I balance with my full-time job in financial services. My work deals with compliance and regulation. I have worked full-time for six years now, and I'm not unionized. When I received the invitation to volunteer, my first thought was this is a great opportunity to give back to the community. Plus, it's an important topic that affects every employed individual. I'm interested in the networking opportunities the Assembly offers, meeting new people and also working with experts and coordinators. I strongly believe that a company's bottomline must benefit all stakeholders—including employees. People are a company's most important resource, and a happy worker will only create and add value to the organization.

Jennifer Ross, Kitchener

I was born in Toronto, lived across the road from the Ontario Science Centre, and when I was 13 we moved to our cottage on the Chippewas of Rama First Nation reserve, then built a house right in Orillia (I am not indigenous). I lived in Orillia until my first child was born, then moved to Kitchener/Waterloo where I've lived ever since. I worked in public accounting for over 28 years, although I'm not an accountant. I am a bookkeeper, and am now self-employed and very busy! My hobby is advocating for democracy in Canada. I have knowledge of both the employer and employee side of things, and experience working on a shop floor working in a unionized environment, although I was not in the union myself. My reason for volunteering for the Assembly is because I advocate for citizens' assemblies, and when you get a chance to actually participate in one, it would be hypocritical (and completely against the evidence) not to! In taking part in the Assembly, I am hopeful that government(s), employers, and unions treat our recommendations with the respect we deserve, and that some improvements are achieved. (Do I expect everything will pass? No, I do not.) Laws only go so far, and rights mean you have to have money to fight for them. And even then the law allows wide loopholes for employers to evade you. It also works the other way for employers in some cases. If employees had their voices heard before it gets to legal action, both employers and employees would be better off.

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Nelson Rouleau, Welland

I grew up and live in Welland near Niagara Falls. I retired four years ago from the Canadian Tire call centre after 23 years working in their roadside department. I did a bunch of odd jobs before that: working in family-owned bakeries, delivering commercial cleaning products, and driving a school bus. In my spare time, I do woodworking, take walks, and travel when I can. My favourite destination is Europe. I've been told that I am quite the joker once I get to know someone and get comfortable! I volunteered for the Assembly so I could share my insight on workplace democracy. I hope the Assembly can help create some tools that enable workers to give feedback to employers. I strongly feel that workers who are not unionized and work in the private sector very much need a voice to express their feelings and make their concerns heard.

Jennifer Sipos, Newmarket

I have lived in Newmarket all my life. I have a Master of Teaching degree and work as an elementary level supply teacher with union benefits. My job gives me the wonderful opportunity to interact with fellow educators, students, and staff from lots of different schools in diverse communities. I am passionate about fostering creativity, resilience, and growth in my students. Apart from that, I love literature, comedy, dogs, nature, and gardening—I am growing vegetables and herbs. I have never participated in something like the Assembly before, so I am super-excited to contribute and listen to what others have to say. I expect these different perspectives will help inform my own work. I believe it is important to make sure workers are satisfied with their workplaces and have the means to make themselves heard, for without workers there is no work to be done.



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Claire Sterling, Ottawa

I grew up in the Greater Ottawa Area and escaped to earn my Bachelor of Science. Then, I became the stereotypical millennial: overeducated and underemployed, boomeranging back to Ottawa for financial reasons. After years of job-searching, I landed a full-time, union position in administration. Unfortunately, I entered a toxic work environment with apathetic management. The injurious culture took a toll on my health, and I lost my job after three years. I have yet to land back on my feet; at least I've had the time to feed my curiosity in a wide range of interests, everything from the universal symbolism incorporated in Tarot to the engineering in buildings to calligraphy. As I repeatedly re-enter the workplace, I struggle to fit my disabilities into traditional work or even non-traditional work. As in my old office, now in our work-focused society, this idea of "not being productive" has taken away my voice, despite my being a constant consumer of people's work. I watch not only my humanity slipping away, but the workers who serve me, day in and day out. Workers are human beings and should be treated as such. I believe we are our best selves when we are heard and able to be ourselves; if employers want our best, we need the space to be our best. It's time to build it.

Gillian Tait, Toronto

I grew up in Toronto, still live here. I am passionate about baking and plants, especially succulents—I have close to 200! I worked in customer service for a couple of years before taking a certificate course and moving into technical support, which was really transformative for me. I work full-time, and I'm not unionized. Even though I like my job, I see many areas for improvement in terms of the work environment. By joining the Assembly, I am looking to learn more about workplace rights in Ontario, engage in dialogue with other people, and possibly effect change. We spend such a major chunk of our time working that not having a say in how that time is spent can be very disempowering for workers. Giving a voice to working people and making them feel supported will not only make them better employees but also better members of society.

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Matt Tallon, Thunder Bay

I was born and raised in Thunder Bay. I have a bachelor's degree in sociology, a master's in Canadian and Indigenous Studies, and I'm hoping to pursue my PhD soon in methadone maintenance treatment for mental health and addictions. I currently work in customer service in retail. While doing my master's, I did a bunch of short-term contractual jobs in academia, working as a research assistant, teaching assistant, marker/grader, etc. In my spare time, I watch anime or take long walks in the neighbourhood. I volunteered for the Assembly because I am curious to know what the Ontario government has done or can do to promote workplace democracy. Feeling like you have no control over your work life or feeling pressured to do things that are not achievable or reasonable—especially when these expectations are set by upper-level managers who refuse to listen to you—can be very stressful for workers. Poorly designed workplaces also affect employee well-being, something I see in my current retail job a lot where store layouts are inconvenient for older workers to navigate. I really wish workers had more of a say in such matters.

Brett Tanaka, East York

I have lived in Toronto all my life. I retired from a supervisory position from the Ontario Science Centre after 32 years on the job. I used to play hockey at the Junior B level—very hard to do when balancing a full-time day job—and was also very taken by frisbee. Now I spend my time landscaping, foraging for edibles and mushrooms, and looking after my 14-month-old granddaughter. I was heavily involved in union work throughout my career with the Government of Ontario. I'm also Health and Safety certified and very aware of employee rights. I'm hoping to share this experience with the Assembly while learning new things and hearing other people's opinions. I strongly feel that organizations must consider and respect their workers' experiences if they wish to best utilize their staff, and figure out a way to hold incompetent managers accountable.



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Klint Tejada, Markham

I live in Markham but I am originally from the Philippines. I am a recent university graduate currently working in background screening services, but in the long term I aspire to work in law enforcement. My hobbies are kickboxing and cooking—I make a mean chicken parmesan. I volunteered for the Assembly because I have free time on my hands and also because I'm curious about the process. I like my current job, but my experience in previous jobs was not that great. I had very little work-life balance and felt unsupported by my co-workers. I have noticed that people who work just to get paid or who are pressured into working rarely put in much effort. That is why worker voice is imperative. If I were a manager, I would nurture bonds with employees so they can be happy, motivated, and productive.

Michelle Tien, Mississauga

I live in Mississauga, which is where I grew up. I currently work in the provincial government, which has been really interesting in the last couple years. My education is in urban planning from the University of Waterloo, during which I had the chance to work with municipal governments, land use authorities, and conservation groups, which gave me different ways to look at my own community. My previous job was in real estate acquisition, during which I found the spatial aspect interesting—something that has continued to my role with the Ontario government. I was inspired to join the Assembly because I have always been interested in policy, and I think most people do not have the time to dig deep into the behind-the-scenes issues that impact us all. I am really looking forward to hearing the different perspectives from the Assembly members. As I've gotten older, I have made an effort to listen to points of view from outside my social circles, and the Assembly will allow me to do that. Work makes up a huge part of our lives, so it is important that we enjoy our time at work. It has such a big effect on our lives, both monetarily and in terms of work-life balance. In my spare time, I like crafting, knitting, and doing anything else that allows me to be creative. I also really enjoy trying out new restaurants: recently, I visited a friend in the Bay Area who introduced me to a South Indian cafe, and to an ice cream shop that specializes in flavours inspired by Indian food.

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Drasty Vora, Guelph

I immigrated to Canada three years ago from India. I have a degree in clinical pharmacy. I have been working as a medical writer for a pharmaceutical company for six years, partly in India and now in Canada. I work full-time and I'm not unionized. My hobbies include singing, listening to music, and exploring new places in Canada—my favourite so far is Montreal! I think it's great that Canada is looking to engage the public in decision-making and policy design. I volunteered so I could take this opportunity to give my input. I think it is important for workers to have a say because their point of view accurately reflects the ground reality. As a part of this Assembly, I expect to understand worker concerns from diverse backgrounds and industries and help improve the future workplace environment.

Kylie Zamora, Oshawa

I was born in the Philippines, grew up in Toronto, and moved to the Durham region six years ago. I enjoy doing art, travelling, and swimming. Fun fact: I am a Yelp Elite member and get invited to restaurant openings and re-launch events all over Toronto! Work-wise, I have been in human resources for the last seven years, and before that I worked in an educational institution. I am also involved with the student union at the Ontario Tech University in Oshawa, which is very exciting for me. As a part of this Assembly, I am most interested in hearing other people's experiences and understanding the gaps in worker welfare, then using that insight to inform the design of employee policies and procedures in my work. I believe it is important to make sure workers are being heard and their requests accommodated as much as possible. If HR managers are not open-minded about workers' opinions, are we servicing them like we should or just working for our own benefit?



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SPEAKER PROFILES

The Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy engaged eight distinguished academics and experts in the realms of labour law, business and worker rights. These experts made presentations to the Assembly members on specific policy options as well as the general landscape of workplace democracy theory and practice, as members prepared to deliberate their recommendations.

Roy Adams is professor emeritus of industrial relations and international labour law at the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University in Hamilton. He is a globally recognized expert in international and comparative industrial relations and international labour and human rights law. He has written extensively on public policy regarding labour issues, industrial relations theory and freedom of association as a human right.

David Doorey is associate professor of work law at York University and director of Osgoode Hall Law School's labour and employment law program. His book, *The Law of Work* (2nd ed.), is used in universities and colleges across Canada. He is editor of the Canadian Law of Work Forum, a national collaborative law blog, and his former blog *Law of Work* was a multiple award winner as the top law blog in Canada.

Cynthia Estlund is the Catherine A. Rein professor of law at the New York University's School of Law. A leading scholar of labor and employment law and workplace governance, her current work focuses on automation and the future of work. In her book, *Regoverning the Workplace: From Self-Regulation to Co-Regulation* (2010), she chronicled the current crisis of workplace governance in the US and charted a potential path forward.

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Thomas C. Kohler is a Concurrent Professor of Law and Philosophy at Boston College, and an internationally recognized authority on the labour and employment laws of the United States and other western nations, with an emphasis on German law. He has served as a Fulbright Professor on the law faculty of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität (Frankfurt am Main), and has taught at the University of Texas and Columbia University.

Thomas Kochan is the George Maverick Bunker professor of management at the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His recent work calls attention to the need for a new social contract at work, one that anticipates and engages current and future technological changes in ways that build a more inclusive economy and broadly shared prosperity. His most recent book is *Shaping the Future of Work: A Handbook for Action and a New Social Contract* (2021).

Sara Slinn is associate professor of labour and employment law at Osgoode Hall Law School. Her research interests are in the areas of labour and employment law, focusing on different approaches and impediments to collective employee representation, and the intersection of Charter rights and labour law. She has also practised labour and employment law with both the British Columbia Labour Relations Board and a private law firm in Vancouver.

Johanna Weststar is associate professor in the department of management and organizational studies at Western University in London, Ont., and adjunct professor in the I/O psychology area. She specializes in labour and employment relations. Her primary area of research is the video game industry, where she is interested in issues of workplace citizenship, representation and unionization, working conditions and the labour process, project management and occupational identity.

Meredith Woodwark is assistant professor of organizational behaviour and human resource management at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont. Previously she worked in the public sector as a senior manager in health care, utilities and higher education, as well as in the private sector as a management consultant specializing in family-run firms. Her research focuses on motivation and goal setting for highly complex, novel tasks including learning goals, multiple goals, and employee engagement.

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The Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy also heard from seven guests who addressed members from the perspectives of public policy, advocacy, and lived experience in the realm of strengthening worker voice.

Angelo Dicaro is director of research at Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union.

Anthony Giles is the former assistant deputy minister in the labour program of employment and social development Canada.

Deena Ladd is the executive director of Workers Action Centre in Toronto.

Rohinton Medhora is an economist, the former chair of the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee, and distinguished fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo.

Lisa Raitt is a former Member of Parliament representing the riding of Malton, and former Minister of Labour for the Conservative Party of Canada.

Lauren Tedesco is the senior vice president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturing Association.

Greta Whipple is a union organizer, customer service employee at Indigo books, and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW).



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PROJECT TEAM

Steering Committee***Rafael Gomez, Chair of the Assembly***

I'm an associate professor of employment relations at the University of Toronto. My current research examines the role of unions and other labour market institutions in the provision of employee voice and what this means for workers and broader democratic engagement.

***Andrew Gibson, Program Manager***

I joined the Ontario Assembly on Workplace democracy through an assignment opportunity as a Visiting Researcher with the University of Toronto. I gained experience in the area of labour relations policy with the Government of Canada's Labour Program. Prior to working in a government, I completed a Ph.D. at McGill University's Department of Communication Studies. I have a particular interest in initiatives to strengthen and further Canadian democracy, and see the workplace as a potential "seedbed of civic virtue."

***Simon Pekk, Steering Committee Lead***

I work as an associate professor at the Gustavson School of Business at the University of Victoria. My research broadly explores how organizations and the individuals within them embed social and environmental sustainability into their cultures, strategies, and daily operations. Currently, many of my projects centre on helping democratic organizations like co-operatives, schools, and unions achieve their social and environmental objectives through the use of democratic innovations. I am particularly interested in collaborating with organizations on joint action research projects.

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PROJECT TEAM

***Abdullah Naqvi, Civic Concierge***

I am a second-year graduate student at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. When I heard about the Assembly last spring, I immediately knew I was interested: citizens assemblies are extraordinary tools for making people's voices heard and promoting democratic ideals. Advocating for workers is one of my passions, and participating in this project has been an honour.

***Andreas Vatiliotou, Communications Lead***

I'm an Admin and Communications Professional who has supported students, senior leaders, and the delivery of their projects for 10+ years at the University of Toronto, and the Ontario Assembly on Workplace Democracy is one of the many exciting and timely initiatives I've been honoured to support during my tenure.

Facilitation Team***Richard Johnson, Host and Senior Facilitator***

Over the past seven years, I've facilitated over two dozen similar assemblies, reference panels, and public consultations, on topics ranging from improving transit systems and pharmacare policy to neighbourhood revitalization and airport noise mitigation. I am consistently amazed and humbled by the willingness of my fellow citizens to engage constructively, respectfully and eagerly with each other, no matter their different perspectives and expertise.

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Sandrine Haentjens, Facilitator

I'm a second-year Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. I've always been an advocate of the notion that policy decisions should be informed by the people who actually have experience with the subject matter, and that's one of the things this project embodies.



Ana Cristina Rodrigues De Oliveira, Facilitator

I'm a Ph.D. student at the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. My research interests are on the perspective of workers on their rights, values, and choice limitations. I appreciated hearing from the Assembly members about their everyday concerns, constraints and solutions regarding their working conditions.



Qays Matadar, Facilitator

I am entering the third year of my undergraduate degree, doing a double major in evolutionary anthropology and industrial relations. I very much appreciated hearing everyone's experiences, views and opinions on workplace democracy.

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Milad Moghaddas, Facilitator

I am a master of industrial relations and human resources candidate at the University of Toronto, entering my second and final year of the degree. What I appreciate most about citizens' assemblies is fostering an environment where participants' opinions are attentively listened to and welcomed, in hopes to generate tangible insights to governments and organizations—in this case, on how to improve the capability of workers to influence decision-making in their workplaces.



Avani Patwardhan, Facilitator

I am an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto entering my fourth year as a double major in psychology and industrial relations and human resources with a minor in economics. I'm ecstatic to be part of this Assembly's work, specifically because I was inspired to pursue a career in human resources after witnessing the treatment of employees during the COVID-19 recession.



William Roelofs, Facilitator

I am a Ph.D. candidate in political science at the University of Toronto. I hold an H.B.A in political science, history and American studies from the University of Toronto (2015) and an M.A in comparative political science from the University of Western Ontario (2016). I learned a great deal from seeing the diversity of perspectives at our Citizens' Assembly.

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About the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources

Since 1965, the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources has brought together professors from many different disciplines and departments at the University of Toronto to teach and conduct research on all aspects of the workplace and employment relationships. The CIRHR faculty reflect the depth, breadth, and diversity of our university.

