

Unifor's Submission to Ontario's Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee

July 2021



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About Unifor

Unifor represents approximately 163,000 members in Ontario ranging across diverse sectors including retail, tourism, gaming, warehousing and delivery, auto, aviation, health and long term care, telecommunications, media, post-secondary education, mining, and oil and gas, among others.

Many of our members have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis and have experienced firsthand its toll on Ontario's workers and their families. Our submission to the Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee draws on the hard lessons that our members have had to learn while contending with COVID-19 and the economic fallout from the pandemic, which severely impacted a number of sectors that Unifor represents.

In what follows, attention is first drawn to some of the primary sectoral and labour market challenges in Ontario during the crisis, before tackling the three pillars identified by the committee as the main touchstones for the future of work in the province.

Ontario's economy and COVID-19

As Unifor's monthly [Labour Market Insights](#) report has documented over the past months, Ontario's labour market experienced some of the most severe disruptions during the COVID-19 crisis, with an unemployment rate that has been, on average, higher than most other Canadian regions. Only Atlantic Canada has experienced higher, sustained unemployment since the beginning of the pandemic.

At the peak of the first wave in May 2020, Ontario lost well over 1.1 million jobs, which accounted for approximately 14% of its labour force. The unemployment rate hit 13.5% and the employment rate fell by nearly 8 percentage points from February to May 2020. While there was a slight improvement after the first and second waves of the pandemic, the belated reintroduction of public health measures during the third wave has meant that the unemployment rate continues to hover around 9-10%. In May 2021, four of the top five census metropolitan area (CMA) unemployment rates in Canada were in Ontario: Belleville, St. Catharines-Niagara, Windsor, and London.

Of course, these impacts were highly unequal and experienced differently depending on where one was located in the labour market. For example, between February and May 2020, part-time jobs in Ontario declined by nearly 30% compared to 12% for full-time jobs. Meanwhile, the provincial unemployment rate for women – which had been on par with men prior to the crisis – surged ahead by a full percentage point by May 2020 and has remained elevated since. Perhaps most strikingly, nearly a third of youth aged 15 to 24 were in the ranks of the unemployed by May 2020, compared to just one out of ten at the start of 2020. In addition, Indigenous people experienced a larger increase in unemployment compared to non-indigenous people across Canada, including in Ontario. In other words, the crisis laid bare the significant barriers that the most vulnerable cohorts of workers face in obtaining secure, well-paid employment in Ontario.

The deep labour market inequalities that the COVID-19 crisis underscored extended to the sectoral level, with service sector industries in Ontario bearing the brunt of job losses while sectors where workers could easily transition to work from home saw sustained or even increased employment. As numerous Unifor members in Ontario experienced firsthand, workers in the air transportation, hospitality, retail, and gaming industries suffered deep job cuts, with many workplaces remaining at a virtual standstill since the start of the pandemic. It is still unclear how many of the workers who lost their jobs will return to their previous employment and how many will need to transition to new employers or even entirely different industries as re-opening plans roll out.

Manufacturing industries also saw significant layoffs during the early phase of the pandemic but has largely recovered since then. The pandemic, however, revealed just how detrimental the loss of domestic manufacturing capacity has been to Ontario's ability to respond to crises and prevent deep downturns, for example, through made in Canada personal protective equipment, ventilators and even pharmaceuticals and vaccines.

The gendered and racialized inequalities that were a consistent feature of the COVID-19 downturn extended beyond the unemployed to the communities and workers who were most impacted by COVID-19 infections. Racialized and low-waged workers experienced disproportionately high rates of severe illness leading to hospitalization and death. This was particularly the case with long-term care facilities, warehouses and other forms of essential frontline work where women and racialized workers are highly concentrated, and which did not receive adequate preventative guidance or personal protective equipment from the government of Ontario. Furthermore, enforcement of COVID-19 rules was weak and allowed infections to spread despite expert advice on how to reduce infections.

Paid sick days, which Unifor and other labour advocates repeatedly emphasized would have lowered the rates of transmission in such frontline workplaces, were introduced far too late into the third wave and offered only three temporary days of paid leave. Ontario continues to have too few paid sick days to make a sizeable impact on transmission rates. Regulations remain totally insufficient to protect workers should there be a future public health emergency in the province.

Unifor's Build Back Better Road Map

Early on during the crisis, Unifor released its [Build Back Better road map](#), which called on governments across Canada to confront the economic challenges posed by the pandemic head on. The paper showed that any response to the pandemic must include policies and programs to ensure the country emerges from the crisis on more solid economic footing, with a resilient labour market and industries capable of weathering future unexpected storms.

In particular, the road map called for a revitalization of Canada's income security system (including permanent paid sick days, a minimum wage increased to 60% of the median wage of full-time workers, and strengthened employment security and standards),

significant investments in green jobs and decarbonization (expanded renewable energy, zero-emissions transit, clean tech in auto and related sectors, and a just transition fund), critical infrastructure spending on public works and transit tied to domestic procurement, a rebuilding of domestic industrial capacity all along the supply chain, and rescue packages that benefited workers rather than corporate executives and shareholders.

The pandemic has increased inequality across regions and marginalized groups. Rather than returning to the status quo that left thousands of individuals and families struggling to get by or, worse, creating new laws and regulations that will push even more people into poverty and economic exclusion, Ontario should implement a set of strong, worker and human focussed policies that improve employment quality and quality of life for everyone.

While government has pushed the ball forward on some fronts, there remains much to be done. Ontario, in particular, has largely taken a reactive stance towards the crisis, responding in an ad-hoc manner to the direct consequences of the pandemic rather than laying the groundwork for a stronger, more equitable and resilient economy. Unifor's Ontario [2021 Budget submission](#) called on the provincial government to address a number of the flaws that had been revealed in both Ontario's health care system and the economy itself. These included **instituting at least 7 permanent days of paid sick leave, the phasing out of for-profit long-term care homes, implementing universal pharmacare in partnership with the Federal government, and additional investments in health care and hospitals.**

Unifor also called on the Ontario government to protect its most vulnerable and precarious workers **by raising the provincial minimum wage to 60% of the median full-time wage (\$15.86 in 2020) and raising wages for public sector frontline workers in health care, education, and social services; investing in the manufacturing sector by sharing the costs of made-in-Canada municipal transit vehicle purchases and working with federal/municipal governments on a targeted auto development strategy that would see high value investments in zero emission vehicle (ZEV) product and component part programs.** Provincial funding to support Ford's re-tooling of the Oakville Assembly Plant to produce new electric vehicles was a welcome and necessary contribution to the future of auto assembly in Ontario. Further investments in both productive capacity across the supply chain and workers skills are needed to maximize the benefit of this transition toward electrification.

Further recommendations in Unifor's road map include a commitment, by Ontario, to **long-term investments in critical physical and social infrastructure, including implementing universal child care with the Federal government, maintaining and expanding affordable public transit, and building more affordable housing units while implementing greater protections against eviction and rent increases for tenants.**

Key focal points for workforce recovery committee to consider

As the Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee moves forward with its mandate to improve employment policy and investments in Ontario's workers to bolster the economic recovery, it is vital that the foundation of the committee's vision incorporates inclusivity, fairness and resilience. As outlined above, the pandemic has truly underscored how many workers in the province were at risk of falling through the cracks of a patchwork of social and labour market programs that were simply not up to the task of protecting precarious workers from an economic downturn of this magnitude. Without the Federal government's emergency wage and income support programs, there is no doubt that Ontario's welfare and employment programs would have been stretched to the breaking point. Most concerning, as has been seen time and time again throughout the pandemic, racialized workers, women and young people disproportionately suffered the worst effects of the economic crisis and most would have met even worse outcomes without emergency federal support programs. Furthermore, it is expected that thousands of workers will be forced to transition to new careers due to economic restructuring after the crisis, technological change and the transition to green energy. It is imperative government put policies in place that ease the transition for workers and provide support through the adjustment process.

Each of the three recovery pillars identified by the Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee must therefore ensure that, moving forward, **employment policies and investments in Ontario set inclusivity as an overarching goal, with targeted policies and spending that aim to provide secure, good paying jobs including for precarious workers at the margins of the labour market.** The Committee's mandate must also ensure fairness in the labour market, by **ensuring that the province's labour standards recognize the structural powerlessness the vast majority of workers face in the labour market and which address this power difference by orienting the recovery towards improving workers' well-being rather than employers' profits.**

The Committee's mandate must be carried out **with a view towards the need for workers' resilience in the face of unexpected economic and public health crises – so that support programs are in place to help workers weather unexpected storms and to get them quickly back on their feet – as well as economic resilience,** so that Ontario's industries are able to pivot quickly in the face of rapid technological changes and shifts in global demand.

With these three overarching goals in mind, the following sections outline Unifor's recommendations for each of the three recovery pillars identified by the Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee.

Recovery pillar #1: Economic recovery:

How to make Ontario the top jurisdiction with a world-class workforce and talent supply?

There are numerous investments the Ontario government must make in order to make Ontario the top jurisdiction with a world-class workforce and talent supply. Necessary investments are outlined below.

Investments in post-secondary education

A world-class workforce can only come about as a result of quality education, particularly at the post-secondary level where key skills and competencies are developed. Ontario's 2021 budget marks a step in the right direction, with funding earmarked for maintaining and modernizing facilities/equipment at Ontario's universities and colleges, along with targeted funding for post-secondary institutions experiencing financial challenges.

However, the transition to a market based, performance funding model has led to program cuts, particularly for the arts, and incentivized institutions to focus solely on programs that are best suited for particular businesses at the expense of providing well-rounded educational opportunities. The performance based funding model will further damage Ontario's post-secondary education system by increasing inequities, decreasing quality control, increasing precarious work while failing to improve labour market outcomes.

As labour market changes happen more swiftly through technological shifts and the transition to a greener economy, University and College programs will shift as well.

Strategies to target education to these shifts must be developed in tandem with industrial strategies that aim to move the labour force towards growing sectors that are in high demand, while providing high-quality, well rounded education that forms a foundation for people throughout their careers.

For example, any industrial strategy that supports a burgeoning battery and fuel cell industry for zero-emissions vehicles (ZEVs) should include funding that promotes relevant research and development at Ontario post-secondary institutions.

Government needs to hire thousands of personal support workers (PSWs) to meet the 4-hour care standard committed to by the Ford government last fall. Achieving this goal will require additional funding for colleges offering training programs and partnerships across industry. To ensure access to the programs and swift uptake, **the government should provide free tuition, integrate on-the-job training and dramatically improve working conditions and compensation so that workers have confidence in their ability to pay for the necessities of life and work with dignity and respect in the long-term care system.**

Barriers to post-secondary education must also be removed, and the province should **restore the free-tuition program** introduced under the previous government, which saw significant increases in Indigenous, low-income and mature student enrollment. Eliminating tuition costs for low-income families for is a key step towards achieving a fairer, more inclusive labour market.

Investments in advanced job skills for future work

Preparations for the future of work in Ontario must be led by **advanced job skills training and development, guided by clear labour market information and sectoral mapping**. Ontario's current labour market reports largely rely on Statistic Canada's monthly Labour Force Survey, which is far too general to provide the kind of granular data on industrial capacities and labour force skills needed to map potential trajectories forward. Moreover, the job outlooks that are published every two years effectively chart market demand rather than working in tandem with industrial strategies to support job growth in targeted sectors that will be in transition. **The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development must provide funding and resources to work with individual employers and union locals to map out advanced jobs skills that are transferrable or will become needed as industries shift due to technological changes** and the move towards a greener economy.

Unifor's [partnership](#) with Centennial College and the Ontario Ministry of Labour is an excellent example of offering skills-based training to unemployed and underemployed workers in sectors hard hit by the pandemic. The program focuses on micro-credentials in advanced manufacturing and automation. Micro-credentials must not replace the post-secondary education system but can enhance the system.

Investments in essential skills training, multi-stakeholder skills and development strategy tables

Where essential jobs skills are lacking or incomplete for the future of work in Ontario, government should establish multi-stakeholder skills and development strategy tables, so that frontline organizations and employers can provide both input and receive information about the kinds of skills that are in demand.

Furthermore, Ontario must **develop a mechanism to recognize the essential, transferrable skills people have acquired through experience on the job and in life**. This could be achieved through a skills assessment process for basic hard and soft skills. This program must be available through employment service providers and post-secondary institutions.

Unifor has worked with many people who are highly capable workers and learners and have been in the workforce for many years. Their high school or post-secondary education was completed many years ago and they may need assistance to refresh their knowledge around entrance requirements including math, science and literacy. Ontario must **develop a mechanism for workers to acquire the skills necessary to pass the entrance requirements for more involved skills training**. Accessible

services could include one-on-one tutors, small cohort programs, and high school, community and union programs.

Unemployed worker help centres (or “action centres”) provide vital support for workers when their needs are heightened due to job loss. Unifor currently assists with five such action centres in the province of Ontario that are dependent on funding from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. These centres operate through Adjustment Advisory Program Agreements governed by a labour adjustment committee who aim to directly assist displaced members impacted by plant closures.

It has become evident in recent years that more of these help centres and partnerships with unemployed workers’ advocacy groups and networks are needed across Ontario to maintain vital services for the newly unemployed, including through peer-based job search supports, worker-focused skills retraining and help with EI applications. **The government should assign dedicated, annual funding to encourage the development of community-focused action centres, including through joint sponsorships with employers where appropriate.**

As many workers who may not have qualified for employment insurance will be required to transition to new roles or industries after the pandemic, the Ontario government should **ensure universal access to employment services and provide income support for unemployed workers returning to post-secondary education** as they transition to new careers.

Finally, government, industry and workers’ organizations must **convene sector specific tables to foster skills development dialogue and partnership.** These tables should design sector specific training hubs with investment from employers, governments and unions to create a common pool of highly trained workers. Poaching concerns should be addressed through investments in better working conditions as opposed to abdicating the responsibility for training workers to conduct the work necessary to run their business.

Stronger labour standards to encourage good job growth – incentivizing labour market participation

Finally, **an indispensable component of the first pillar must be strengthening labour standards** in Ontario. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed a workforce that was ill-prepared for the double pronged threat of a public health and economic crisis. Declines in job and income security, combined with chronic losses in bargaining power and increasingly precarious employment relationships, meant that the average Ontario worker was highly exposed to both the virus itself and the threat of job loss. These effects were not borne equally, but disproportionately impacted young, racialized and women workers and sectors where union density is low. It is noteworthy that while Quebec suffered a higher unemployment rate in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, its participation rate suffered a smaller impact, suggesting that workers were far more likely to remain attached to their jobs. Quebec has since rebounded and has had the lowest unemployment rate in the country over the past few months. A key

component of Quebec's relative success is undoubtedly its higher rate of collective bargaining coverage (40% in May 2021 compared to 27.2% for Ontario) and stronger labour standards.

Front-line workers across the province have proven just how valuable the work they do is to individuals, to families and to the entire economy. Long term care workers in particular are traumatized after working through what can only be described as a humanitarian crisis. The crisis in long-term care was brewing long before the pandemic began. Ending the crisis will require permanent increases in pay and a commitment to making more jobs full-time to attract people to the rewarding work that has been made grueling by the lack of investment in care provisions.

As Unifor noted in its submission to the Changing Workplaces Consultation in 2015, the polarization of Ontario's labour market into high wage growth/secure employment sectors and stagnant wage growth/insecure employment sectors has been driven by a loss of bargaining power and labour market shifts that have rendered many of Ontario's aging labour standards ineffective. In order to address these chronic problems, Unifor continues to advocate for the two-pronged approach of strengthening unions and improving statutory labour standards.

Unifor's specific recommendations for improving the labour relations model in Ontario can be found in section 4 of our Changing Workplaces submission, but in general it is **proposed that card-based certification be reintroduced for new bargaining units, removing barriers to first contract arbitration, implementing successorship rights, and amending the *Labour Relations Act* to pave way for broader based bargaining in sectors where bargaining unit consolidation would improve collective bargaining outcomes.**

Section 3 of the Changing Workplaces submission details Unifor's proposed amendments to the *Employment Standards Act*, but in general Unifor argued for **improved hours of work regulations to reduce scheduling insecurity and irregular work hours, equal treatment provisions so to eliminate multi-tiered wages and benefits for workers performing substantially the same work (i.e. restoring the Equal Pay for Equal Work provision of Bill 148), protections for migrant workers, and improved enforcement of the *ESA*. Unifor also reiterates its recent call for seven permanent days of paid sick leave and 14 days of paid sick leave during a public health emergency.**

Additional recommendations include developing **portable benefits for workers, employment standards for non-standard workers, pay equity, and on-call pay.**

Government has an important role to play in ensuring employers are adhering to the law. To that end government **must increase proactive workplace inspections to ensure employers are adhering to all labour laws and employment standards and impose stricter financial penalties** when employers are found guilty of employment standards and labour law violations (e.g. unpaid wages, overtime violations, interfering in union drives, etc.).

In *The Good Jobs Strategy: How the Smartest Companies Invest in Employees to Lower Costs and Boost Profits*, author Zeynep Ton outlines the process by which business owners can increase the quality of work in order to improve business and worker outcomes. Government can encourage the kind of conditions needed for this strategy to be put in place in more businesses by increasing wages and working conditions for the lowest paid workers. Furthermore, getting more money into the hands of low-wage workers, including people working in long-term care, grocery stores and other front-line workers, is an economic booster as low-wage workers are more likely to spend that money on necessities in the local economy than people higher up on the income and wealth ladder. **Implementing these solutions would boost the economy from the bottom up.**

Recovery pillar #2: Strengthening Ontario's competitive position:

In an increasingly remote, global and technologically advanced economy, how will we ensure that Ontario remains the best place in North America to recruit, retain, and reward workers?

Growth strategies aren't just about building an environment where people can easily work from home, though that will be important. Just as important are industrial strategies that actively create environments where desired sectors can grow and prosper while building urban and rural environments where people want (and can afford) to live.

Targeted industrial growth strategies and supply chain development

The ability to make and create in Ontario matters. In the days after the pandemic hit, it quickly became clear that Canada was facing a goods and services shortage. Since then, supply shortages, including semi-conductors in the auto sector, have shown how important a strong manufacturing sector in Ontario is to the functioning of Ontario's economy, during crisis and beyond.

Industrial strategies that actively create environments where desired sectors can grow and prosper must be an important component of strengthening Ontario's competitive position. This includes a **focus on advanced manufacturing including aerospace, auto and clean energy, and a telecommunications framework that ensures equitable access and Canadian content.**

The Ontario government must:

- create comprehensive industrial strategies including in critical sectors such as auto, aerospace, and telecommunications;
- implement measures to protect the supply chains for critical goods and services;
- replant the seeds of industrial capacity in targeted growth sectors such as health care and biomedicine;
- reactivate vacant capacity across the province.

For example, in the aerospace sector, **provincial governments should focus on workforce development and planning and the creation of an aerospace council to foster tri-partite conversation and planning** as a first step towards coherent industrial strategy that creates and sustains good jobs, technological advancement and a shift to cleaner travel.

In the telecommunications sector, government **must develop a strategy that will keep good jobs in Canada and require telecommunications companies to maintain good, local jobs if they receive infrastructure funding from the federal or provincial governments.**

In the recent Ontario budget, the province set aside \$56.4 million over four years, to create the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN). The Network aims to encourage innovation and collaboration through partnerships between small and medium-sized enterprises, academia, and auto industry and battery sector. This was a modest step, but certainly in the right direction. **More investments along these lines will be needed if Ontario is to become a centre for battery production, ZEV-related component parts production clean vehicle technological innovation.**

Clean energy investments must become a top priority if Ontario is to tap into the global shift towards renewable energy and clean technology. While Ontario's participation in the Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Roadmap and its Low-Carbon Hydrogen Strategy may offer new paths to job growth in clean energy, the fact remains that expanding existing renewable energy projects would create immediate jobs in the near future while decarbonizing our energy usage. Unfortunately, the current government has moved in the wrong direction on the renewable energy front, having cancelled nearly 800 renewable energy projects in 2018 at the cost of \$231 million and repealed the *Green Energy Act* (2009), which would have created thousands of jobs and new sources of revenue for the growing clean energy sector. **These projects and the *Green Energy Act* should be reinstated and the provincial government must commit to expanding its investments in the renewable energy sector, moving forward.**

The government's announced support for EV production in Ontario continues to be at odds with its elimination of the EV rebate in 2018, which caused EV sales in the province to plummet by 55%. If domestic EV production is to be met by increased domestic demand for EVs, **the rebate program must be restored and additional infrastructure needs (including charging stations) must be meaningfully expanded.**

Ontario's scrapping of its cap-and-trade system and its withdrawal from the carbon pricing market that it shared with Quebec and California also led to a \$1.9 billion revenue shortfall that it was forced to make up through job-killing cuts in other areas.

Investments in core social infrastructure, including Pharmacare, child care, public transit, affordable housing, universal broadband access

Being the best place to work in North America includes building cities and towns where people want (and can afford) to live. This means building the core social infrastructure that people rely on every day and making sure it is affordable. To that end, the Ontario government must:

- **Declare internet access a human right and build broadband infrastructure across the province** to ensure people can access the internet cheaply and easily no matter where they choose to live;
- **Expand investment in zero-emission public transit infrastructure** in both large and small urban settings, which is particularly effective as transit projects will drive demand for electrification, which will have ripple effects throughout the economy;
- **Work with the federal government to roll out the universal, affordable child care** program committed to in federal budget 2021. Government must also respect the 10 necessary elements to ensure a high quality system outlined by [Child Care Now](#);
- Advocate the federal government **implement a universal pharmacare program** and work with the federal government to implement the program provincially;
- Ensure housing affordability across the province. This includes **building and retrofitting housing infrastructure that targets those most in need of affordable, quality housing stock**—renters, Indigenous communities and those with supportive housing needs including the homeless, people with disabilities and people living with addictions and mental health concerns. **Effective incentives for new purpose-built, low income rental housing construction, subsidies for cooperative housing and integration with social programs for vulnerable communities** should remain a priority;
- **Implement a robust and comprehensive skills training program** as highlighted above in cooperation with the federal government. There will be a need for government to facilitate a fair and just transition to new jobs for many—a need that has accelerated due to the pandemic. **Such a program should include access to public post-secondary education, be integrated with Employment Insurance (EI), and should include various components like skills assessments, worker-focused training requirements and income supports while people receive training**;
- **Ensure that high quality, stable employment in Ontario underpins all government programs and investments.** Government must lead in building good jobs into all organizational operations. Instead of creating precarious work, government must ensure stability, security, decent income and access to benefits. It must also make every effort to ensure equity and diversity in hiring and operations.

Recovery pillar #3: Supporting workers:

How to ensure Ontario's technology platform workers benefit from flexibility, control, and security?

While advocates of the gig economy and platform work often tout the advantages of flexibility and independence, Unifor argues that Ontario needs to locate the growth of the gig economy within broader labour market trends that have resulted in increasing precariousness and stagnating wages over the past few decades. Within this context, the choice of entering into gig work is often a constrained choice since many workers – particularly those who are marginalized, including racialized workers, women, youths, and newcomers – have few options to earn a living wage and will take any income-generating opportunity that comes their way.

Unifor believes that workers who opt for the constrained choice of gig work should not be forced to cope with the absence of minimum labour standards and protections. Most importantly, the high degree of financial vulnerability that many gig workers are exposed to and the solitary nature of gig work means that **gig workers must be able to have the right to form a labour union in order to redress common grievances and seek better working conditions**. Unless these issues are addressed, gig work in its current form will inevitably creep into an increasing number of Ontario's industries, leading to a race to the bottom that will only accelerate the growth of precarious work across the province and undermine the province's ability to achieve pillars 1 and 2.

In 2020, the Ontario Labour Relations Board made the historic decision that couriers delivering food on behalf of Foodora Inc. were dependent contractors under the *Labour Relations Act*, which meant that they had the right to unionize. While Foodora effectively circumvented this decision by closing up shop in Ontario, the fact remains that the Board correctly determined that couriers working on behalf of app-based delivery companies were economically dependent upon the company for their income, and were therefore being misclassified as independent contractors. Bill 148, which was effectively repealed by the current government, made it unlawful for employers to misclassify their workers, however, Unifor argues that the law should go one step further by **automatically classifying platform workers as dependent contractors with the right to unionize** unless companies can prove otherwise.

Establishing certain baseline labour standards for gig workers in their capacity as dependent contractors under the *Employment Standards Act* will be necessary to reduce their vulnerability and precariousness. However, gig workers in specific sectors face unique challenges which they must be able to address collectively, through negotiation, rather than relying solely on baseline labour standards. The reality is that many workers in the gig economy work in environments that make it difficult to engage in standard models of collective bargaining due to the fragmented nature of their work and the number of companies or platforms a specific worker might operate on behalf of.

As noted above, **the *Labour Relations Act* should explicitly set out avenues for broader-based, multi-employer bargaining that would permit the negotiation of**

terms (via collective agreement or sectoral tables) for gig workers in a specific sector (e.g. those working for ride-sharing companies, couriers, etc.). Providing gig workers in Ontario with rights of representation and bargaining across an entire sector or platform of gig work would help to establish industry-wide labour standards in the province, which are responsive to the unique challenges of gig work in that area.

Summary and conclusion

Unifor's vision for the future of work in Ontario sees government taking on a bigger role in guiding, rather than merely responding, to economic and labour market realities through bigger investments in the workforce, strengthened labour standards, and targeted industrial strategies for sectors in transition. Above all, Unifor and its members want to see a future of work where the most vulnerable workers are protected from economic downturns and a job market that has become more inclusive, fair and resilient. While the current submission provides a snapshot of Unifor's recommendations for the future of work in Ontario, our organization welcomes the opportunity for more detailed engagement on any of the points outlined above.

Resources

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