



**Submission by the
UFCW Canada Ontario Council
to Ontario's Standing Committee on
Finance and Economic Affairs**

**Recommendations relating to the
Economic and Fiscal Update Act 2020,
and the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis
in the tourism sector**

June 22, 2020

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UFCW Canada Ontario Provincial Council represents over 130,000 members from eight local unions in a variety of industries across the province of Ontario.

Many of our members have been on the frontlines during this pandemic, and we are proud of the exceptional job they have done to take care of Ontario families.

We respectfully want to bring to your attention the impact of COVID-19 on our members who play a key role in the operation and delivery of services in the tourism and hospitality sector. The thousands of workers we represent at hotels, restaurants, in airport food-service, and car rentals have experienced widespread layoffs and reductions in hours, which have devastated their livelihoods.

As the economy reopens, it is vital for the government to take concrete action to protect the health and economic security of workers, restore consumer confidence, and create retraining programs and opportunities for workers to transition into the post-pandemic economy.

The position of UFCW Canada Ontario Council is that the Ontario Government should support and protect tourism workers by implementing the following measures:

Protect the Health and Safety of Workers

- Ensure widespread and easy access to rapid, reliable, and publicly-delivered coronavirus testing. Efficient and timely contact-tracing

must be available in Ontario to help protect the health of workers and the public and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Establish and implement government-required safety protocols for workers upon their return, to ensure a long-lasting recovery is not derailed by a second wave of COVID-19. This includes mandatory personal protective equipment for workers at restaurants, hotels, and airports as needed (including masks) and enhanced infection controls (including physical distancing and frequent sanitation/cleaning protocols).
- Ensure presumptive application of WSIB coverage for those exposed to COVID-19 at work. This will ensure workers won't lose income if they contract COVID-19 at work, and can fully recover before they return.
- Provide ten permanent paid sick days to all workers, so no worker has to choose between their health and their livelihoods. This measure will help protect public health, as workers will be less likely to come in sick, and transmit COVID-19 to co-workers and customers. Currently, Ontario workers have zero paid sick days under employment standards – workers don't only get sick during pandemics.

Restoring consumer confidence to ensure a strong economic revival

- Consumer confidence goes hand-in-hand with a strong economic recovery in the tourism, hospitality and service sectors. Reducing the transmission of COVID-19, instituting strong health and safety protocols, and establishing wide-spread testing and timely contact-tracing will help

consumers gain confidence to participate in the economy broadly, in the tourism sector specifically.

- Develop conditional economic support programs for hard-hit tourism industries, with assurances that the support will help employers keep workers on the job.
- Explore funding for tourism promotion programs to attract consumers to Ontario's hospitality and tourism sectors. A one-time provincial tax credit for residents who visit provincial hotels and restaurants could be an incentive that helps revive Ontario's struggling tourism sector.

Re-training and skills development for a post-pandemic reality

- Recognize the long-lasting impact of COVID-19 on the tourism and hospitality sectors, which are unlikely to rebound quickly.
- Create programs to help Ontario workers, impacted by the pandemic, to re-enter the economy. As worker training experts, unions are best suited to helping workers retrain to find meaningful employment. For example, our unions have the ability and capacity to retrain out of work members at no cost to fill thousands of jobs available in the security sector. To meet the incredible demand for security workers, the government must modernize the licensing process.

Background

UFCW represents thousands of members throughout the province of Ontario in the tourism and hospitality sectors. These workers have experienced widespread layoffs and reductions in hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hotel Sector: 80 to 90% of our members have been laid off as hotel stays collapsed, resulting in many hotels temporarily closing.

Restaurant Sector: 65% of our members have been laid off as locations shut down or pivoted to takeout and delivery services.

Airport Hospitality Sector: 90% of members working in food services at Toronto's Pearson and Billy Bishop airports have been laid off.

Car Rental Sector: Business has dropped by 80 to 90%. Employers are currently renting 100 vehicles a week – compared to the 900 rentals per day prior to the pandemic.

Security Sector: With the Covid-19 pandemic we have witnessed an unprecedented growth in the security guard industry in all sectors of the economy including the hospitality sector. With a new normal and the possibility of a second wave the need for guards will continue. However, during the pandemic it is impossible to take the required test to become a security guard as Drive Test Centres where one has to take a pencil and paper test have been closed. UFCW Canada Locals have the ability and capacity to retrain members at no cost to fill thousands of jobs available in the security sector. Despite our best efforts the government has resisted our pleas to modernize the

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licensing process. We would appreciate the opportunity to enter into discussion with the government to assist in the training and modernization of the licensing process.

Conclusion

As the economy reopens, it is vital for the government to take concrete steps to protect the health and economic security of workers in the tourism sector. Decision-makers must take into account the reality that it may take years for these sectors to return to their pre-pandemic levels, including profit, customer and employment levels.

UFCW Canada Ontario Provincial Council believes implementing these recommendations will help protect the health and safety of workers and the public, revive the economy by restoring consumer confidence, and help support a long-lasting recovery.

Respectfully Submitted by,

UFCW Canada Ontario Council

June 22, 2020