

2022

Pre-Budget Submission

TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS



OUR FUTURE.

ONTARIO'S FUTURE.

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AMAPCEO

ONTARIO'S PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES



Dave Bulmer

PRESIDENT, AMAPCEO

The last two years of Ontario politics have been without precedent. Although the pandemic has made this time incredibly difficult for many Ontarians, we move forward into the new year knowing that better lies in the future.

In many ways, 2022 will be a significant year for the Ontario public sector.

We all hope that the pandemic will finally be behind us, allowing us to return to being with friends and family, and allowing us to begin creating the future of work.

Labour's challenge of the unconstitutional Bill 124—legislation which limits the ability of public servants to freely collectively bargain—will finally be heard in court.

In June, Ontarians will go to the polls in a provincial election.

And, for AMAPCEO, our Ontario Public Service unit—as well as several of our broader public sector units—will bargain new collective agreements.

AMAPCEO's theme for these coming rounds is *Our Future. Ontario's Future.*

This theme encourages us to consider improvements that can be made both within the public service as well as throughout the province. It encourages us to understand how a strong public service can help drive Ontario forward.

This theme also frames our budget submission. In the first part, we speak to the value of public services and the workers that provide them.

Some of the recent decisions by the government—the increase to the minimum wage, for example—give us reason to hope that better possible. In that spirit, AMAPCEO offers its recommendations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Bulmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Bulmer
President & CEO

Our Future: **The value of public services**

From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, AMAPCEO members have continued to provide crucial public services to Ontarians. Whether working remotely or continuing to staff vital government facilities in-person; whether adapting existing programs and policies or devising new ones to deal with the pandemic emergency; whether working as policy professionals in the Ontario Public Service or working on the front lines against COVID-19 in agencies such as Public Health Ontario and Ontario Health—AMAPCEO members have consistently provided work of tremendous value for the people of Ontario.

Yet, despite the value that AMAPCEO members provide, they do not feel valued by the Ford government.

Consider:

- AMAPCEO members pride themselves on providing government and agencies with non-partisan, impartial, professional advice. However, throughout the pandemic, it has been questionable if the government has heeded the expert advice that it has received.
- The government continues to outsource key public services, including (but not limited to) IT. This costly outsourcing of public service work to private interests stifles the growth of a knowledge base in the public service, while lining the pockets of private firms at significant taxpayer expense.
- Bill 124 limits wage increases to one per cent for each of the next three years. This interference with the constitutionally protected right to collectively bargaining (which is being legally challenged by AMAPCEO and other unions) limits public servants to wage increases that fail to match the rising rate of inflation. As such, Bill 124 mandates a de facto pay cut.

In previous budget submissions, we have detailed how Ontario has, per capita, the smallest public service in Canada.¹

This has not come about as the result of one party, or of one government. While the Ford government has exacerbated matters with program cuts and its

¹ AMAPCEO, "2020 Pre-Budget Submission," <<https://amapceo.on.ca/system/files/2020%20Pre-Budget%20Submission.pdf>>.

misguided hiring freeze, we need only look back as far as the last election to find former Premier Kathleen Wynne bragging about Ontario having the “leanest” public service, a public service on which her government spent “less per capita than any province in Canada.”²

We might go even further back in time and consider Bob Rae’s Social Contract, or Mike Harris’ punitive cuts to public services.

The point remains the same: for too long Ontario governments have devalued the contributions of the province’s public servants.

AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:

The immediate repeal of the unconstitutional Bill 124.

2 https://twitter.com/Kathleen_Wynne/status/1000880824902934528

Ontario's Future: Towards fairness at work

As the next provincial election looms, the Ford government has become noticeably more active on labour and employment issues. Notably, the government has:

- established the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee (which reported back with 21 recommendations regarding the future of work)
- increased the minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2022
- made several amendments to the *Employment Standards Act*, including a new rule requiring employers to establish “right to disconnect” policies

While this all adds up to a good start there is more to be done. Here, we make three simple recommendations.

First, as discussed in the first part of this submission, with Bill 124 the government has legislated an unconstitutional limit on the right of public servants to collectively bargain. Beyond the wrongful limitation on wages, the legislation has exacerbated staffing shortages in vital areas of the public service, such as nursing.³

AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:

The immediate repeal of the unconstitutional Bill 124.

Second, the increase to the minimum wage—while welcome—falls well short of ensuring that Ontarians receive a living wage for their labour. According to the Ontario Living Wage Network (OLWN), the living wage in Toronto is \$22.08 per hour. In Ottawa it is \$18.06. In Sudbury, \$16.98. In none of the more than 20 Ontario regions in which the OLWN has done its analysis does the minimum wage meet the level of a living wage.⁴ It is a simple fact that to help Ontarians get out of poverty, the minimum wage must equal a living wage.

Further, research proves that living wage laws benefit the economy overall—

3 See e.g., Doris Grinspun and Brenda Stade, “Ending Ontario’s nursing crisis begins with the repeal of Bill 124,” *Globe and Mail*, 31 December 2021 <<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-ending-ontarios-nursing-crisis-begins-with-the-repeal-of-bill-124/>>.

4 Ontario Living Wage Network, “Living Wage by Region,” <https://www.ontariolivingwage.ca/living_wage_by_region> Accessed on January 18, 2022.

boosting consumer spending, reducing the unemployment rate, raising worker productivity, decreasing employee turnover, and reducing employer costs on hiring and training.⁵

AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:

That Ontario’s minimum wage be a living wage.

Third, Ontario is not a leader on paid sick leave, legislating a minimum standard of only three days of paid sick leave per year.⁶ The federal government has amended the *Canada Labour Code* to mandate that workers be able to accrue up to 10 paid sick days per year,⁷ and British Columbia recently implemented five paid sick days per year.⁸ The Ontario Federation of Labour has called for 10 days of paid sick leave, and bills put forward by both the Ontario New Democrats and Ontario Liberals have sought to implement that standard. While 10 days is a commendable goal, for now as a minimum standard, the government should at least emulate British Columbia and mandate five paid sick days. Not doing so risks undoing all the progress we’ve collectively made against the pandemic.

AMAPCEO RECOMMENDS:

A minimum of five guaranteed paid sick days for all employees.

5 Jeff Thompson & Jeff Chapman, “The economic impact of local living wages,” *Economic Policy Institute*, 15 February, 2006 <<https://www.epi.org/publication/bp170/>>.

6 Ontario, *Employment Standards Act*, s. 50(2).

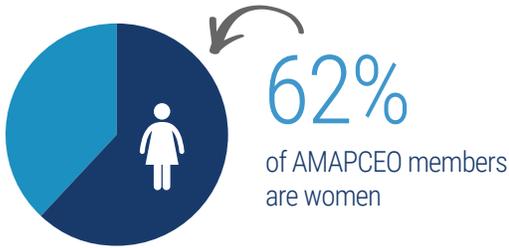
7 Canada, “Legislation to provide ten days of paid sick leave and enhance protections for health care workers receives Royal Assent,” 17 December, 2021 <<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2021/12/legislation-to-provide-ten-days-of-paid-sick-leave-and-enhance-protections-for-health-care-workers-receives-royal-assent.html>>.

8 British Columbia, “Paid Sick Leave,” <<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/paid-sick-leave>>. Accessed on January 18, 2022.

Who We Are

AMAPCEO is a member-driven, politically non-partisan union of more than 15,000 professional employees, dedicated to providing outstanding representation and other services to our members. We protect members' rights, defend

Ontario's public services, and advocate for better working conditions for everyone.



62%

of AMAPCEO members are women

The majority of AMAPCEO members work for the Ontario Public Service (OPS). They work in every ministry, and in agencies, boards, and commissions in over 130 communities across the province and in eleven cities outside Canada.

We also represent members in seven bargaining units in the Broader Public Sector:

- the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario;
- the Ontario Arts Council;
- Ontario Health - Quality Unit;
- Public Health Ontario;
- Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care; and
- the former offices of the Ontario Child Advocate and the French Language Services Commissioner (now part of the Office of the Ontario Ombudsman)

Our membership is educated, professional, and diverse. They are problem solvers who take pride in working hard and offering creative, evidence-based solutions to public policy issues. They are passionate about serving the public interest.

As a politically non-partisan union, AMAPCEO has a long and proud of working in a constructive, problem-solving manner with governments of all political stripes. We have worked successfully on legislation and policy initiatives and negotiated free and fair collective agreements with governments led by all three major parties.

15,000
public professionals
represented

See more of
AMAPCEO's submissions at
amapceo.on.ca/publications

AMAPCEO

ONTARIO'S PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES

Established in 1992, AMAPCEO is a bargaining agent that represents 15,000 professional and supervisory public servants who work in the Ontario Public Service or one of six organizations in the Broader Public Sector.

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