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# Ontario Liberals looking to boost minimum wage, worker protections

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Would provide more sick days, offer benefits package



By [Jim Wilson](#)

Mar 28, 2022 / [Share](#)

The Ontario Liberal Party has come up with a plan for “economic dignity” to build “a growing economy that works for everyone”.

Under the plan, Liberals will increase the minimum wage to \$16 an hour starting Jan. 1, 2023 to help the more than 700,000 workers who, it says, were [denied three years of increases to their wages](#).

The current minimum wage rate stands at [\\$15 per hour](#), which took effect at the start of this year.

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The Liberal Party also plans to develop a living wage structure that provides liveable wages for people in different regions of Ontario, factoring in different wage rates in different regions of the province.

## **Gig worker protections, sick days, four-day workweek**

The plan also seeks to modernize Ontario employment laws to classify gig workers as employees. The move will give these workers the same rights and protections all workers have, including access to sick days, workplace insurance and holiday and severance pay.

Previously, the Ontario government recommended the creation and recognition of the [“dependent contractor” category](#) for gig or platform workers in the app-based space.

On the health front, the Ontario Liberals also claim they will provide 10 paid sick days for all workers — something that [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau previously promised](#) for Canadians.

The Liberals are also looking to try out a four-day workweek scheme in Ontario.

“We’ll work with businesses and labour groups of all types to design and evaluate the model. If a four-day workweek demonstrates potential in Ontario, people could have many more ‘Family Day Weekends’ – extra time to invest in their wellbeing and spend with loved ones,” it says.

In October 2021, the [Ontario Liberal Party also promised to implement a four-day workweek if elected](#).

## Benefits package

The Liberal party are also vowing to create a package of high-quality and affordable benefits that everyone can use, including self-employed, gig, contract and creative workers.

Employers without comparable benefits would be required to enroll staff while offering employees the option to opt out. The plan will be portable and able to follow workers between employers, says the party.

Small businesses will be given an extra two years before automatic enrolment is required to the package. The Liberals will provide these employers with a tax credit to contribute up to 25 per cent of employees' benefits and enhance labour retention.

“We’ll also make it easier for smaller employers or individual people to join pension plans, and provide low-income earners with dollar-for-dollar matching up to \$1,000 a year to help save for retirement or a rainy day. [cost: approx. \$280 million annually],” says the Ontario Liberal party.

The party will also require all employer health benefit plans to cover mental health services, and include mental health coverage in the new portable benefits plan.

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