



Submission by UFCW Locals 175 & 633

on Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing
our Economy Act, 2025

to the Standing Committee on the Interior

May 2025

On behalf of the membership of the United Food & Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Canada Locals 175 & 633, Ontario's leading private sector union, we welcome the opportunity to present a submission to the [Standing Committee on the Interior on Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025](#).

UFCW Canada represents more than 250,000 members across the country and is a leading trade union in the retail, food processing, and hospitality sectors. Fifty-two per cent of our members are women, and 40 per cent are under the age of 30. In Ontario, UFCW Locals 175 & 633 represents 70,000 members across every industry including healthcare and the public sector, in addition to our core sectors mentioned above.

The primary rationale for Bill 5, as set out in the preamble, is “protecting Ontario from global economic uncertainty by unleashing our economy... Working to make Ontario the best place in the G7 to invest, create jobs and do business.”

In **SCHEDULE 9 - SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES ACT, 2025**, it states:

“The Schedule enacts the *Special Economic Zones Act, 2025*.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to make regulations designating special economic zones and the Minister is authorized to make regulations designating trusted proponents and projects.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to make regulations exempting a trusted proponent or designated project from requirements under an Act, regulation or other instrument under an Act, including by-laws of a municipality or local board, as those

requirements would apply in a special economic zone. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is also authorized to make regulations modifying the application of provisions of an Act, regulation or other instrument under an Act, including by-laws of a municipality or local board, as those provisions would apply with respect to a trusted proponent or designated project in a special economic zone.”

We are concerned that **Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025, SCHEDULE 9 - SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES ACT, 2025**, will not protect the province from global economic uncertainty, but rather, create devastating economic issues for workers in Ontario.

For the purposes of this Standing Committee, **UFCW Locals 175 & 633 recommends explicit confirmation in the legislation that labour legislation including: The Ontario Labour Relations Act, The Employment Standards Act, The Occupational Health and Safety Act, and The Ontario Human Rights Code, will be recognized in the “special economic zones”. UFCW Locals 175 & 633 recommends the following amendments in bold;**

Exemption from requirements

5 (1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, exempt a trusted proponent or a designated project from requirements under provisions of an Act or of a regulation or other instrument under an Act, subject to conditions specified in the regulation, as those requirements would apply in a special economic zone.

Municipal by-laws, etc.

(2) For greater certainty, the reference to “other instrument under an Act” in subsection (1) includes a by-law or other instrument of a municipality or local board.

(3) Subsection 1 does not apply to labour, human rights or other employment-related legislation, regulations or other instruments.

Modification of application of provisions of other Acts, etc.

6 (1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, modify the application of provisions of an Act or of a regulation or other instrument under an Act, subject to conditions specified in the regulation, as those provisions would apply,

(a) with respect to a trusted proponent in a special economic zone; or

(b) with respect to a designated project in a special economic zone.

(2) Subsection 1 does not apply to labour, human rights or other employment-related legislation, regulations or other instruments.

BACKGROUND

In Schedule 9 of Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025, is the wide-ranging power to create “special economic zones” anywhere in the province. Within these zones, the provincial government can suspend or override all existing laws and regulations

around labour conditions, health and safety, and environmental protections, as well as municipal regulations.

We only need to look at certain jurisdictions in the United States where labour rights have been weakened. The evidence shows that in these areas, workers have not seen improvements in their quality of life – instead, wages, benefits, and working conditions have declined.

Why is it important to ensure that provincial governments should not suspend or override existing laws and regulations around labour conditions?

1. Ensures Fair Treatment and Dignity for Workers

More labour rights – such as the right to fair wages, safe working conditions, and freedom from discrimination – are fundamental to human dignity. Without these rights, workers are vulnerable to exploitation, such as being underpaid, forced to work in unsafe environments, or subjected to harassment and abuse. Protecting labour rights ensures that workers are treated fairly and respectfully, contributing to a just and equitable society.

2. Promotes Economic Stability

When workers have rights and protections, they are more likely to be healthy, motivated, and productive. Secure jobs, fair pay, and safe workplaces reduce turnover and absenteeism, leading to greater efficiency and economic output. Labour rights also support consumer spending, as fairly compensated workers have more disposable

income. Undermining these rights can lead to economic instability, strikes, and a decline in worker morale.

3. Reduces Inequality and Social Unrest

Labour rights play a crucial role in reducing income and power imbalances between employers and employees. Without these protections, wealth and decision-making power become concentrated in the hands of a few, while workers face growing economic insecurity. This imbalance can fuel social tensions and unrest. By protecting labour rights, societies can maintain social cohesion, promote inclusive growth, and prevent conflict.

When any region could be named one in which fundamental labour rights and protections no longer apply, including those around child labour, the right to refuse unsafe work, and even basic meal breaks, workers fair treatment and dignity decreases, and workers are less protected.

Concluding Remarks

UFCW Locals 175 & 633 welcomes the opportunity to further discuss any questions or concerns the Standing Committee may have. **Prosperity in Ontario can only happen when labour rights are respected, and workers have the opportunity to work in environments with dignity and respect.**

Respectfully submitted by UFCW Canada Locals 175 & 633