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Lawsuit against wage restraint legislation advances

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(Toronto, ON) – A Coalition of over 40 advocacy organizations, including the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), have formally filed evidence in a lawsuit to repeal Ontario Bill 124. The University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA), a member of OCUFA, strongly opposes Bill 124 because it severely limits wage and benefit increases for public sector workers, a move the Coalition says violates bargaining rights enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The legislation would limit increases to 1% for three-year periods—well below the rate of inflation.

“Bill 124, puts downward pressure on faculty association bargaining and is a transparent attack on the Charter-protected right to bargain,” said UTFA President Terezia Zorić. “UTFA stands with the Ontario labour movement in challenging the Ontario government’s ongoing efforts to infringe on the bargaining rights of public sector workers, including university professors, academic librarians, and other staff in the post-secondary education sector.”

The Coalition, representing approximately 270,000 employees, has taken this significant step of a lawsuit due to the detrimental impact of Bill 124 on a wide range of workers employed in the public sector. The recently filed 14 volumes of evidence, comprising 4,500-pages, documents these impacts.

A Manitoba court recently found that similar restrictions on collective bargaining in Manitoba violate the Charter, describing that legislation as a ‘draconian measure that inhibited and dramatically reduced’ the collective bargaining rights of unionized public sector workers.

“The decision in Manitoba affirms our position that unconstitutional legislation such as Bill 124 must be struck down by the Courts,” said the Coalition’s lead counsel, Steven Barrett, managing partner of Goldblatt Partners.

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