

PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

HALIFAX REGIONAL REPORT

June 11th, 2016 – Halifax Central Library

What You Said About Education

- Tuition fees are a significant barrier to higher education
- Nova Scotia has the third highest tuition fees in Canada with an average student debt of \$37,000. Students in Halifax might be facing an additional tuition fee hike as high as an additional 37% this year.
- Nova Scotia has deregulated tuition fees for out of province students.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Establish a National Post-Secondary Education Act.**
 - **An immediate 15% reduction in tuition fees and a framework to eliminate them by 2026.**
 - **Conversion of all provincial student loans to grants.**
 - **Stable 3% funding increases to university funding every year.**
 - **Forgiving student debt of recent graduates.**

What You Said About Youth Unemployment

- Lack of employment has created the narrative that people go to university and then must leave the province to find a job.
- People are taking jobs immediately after post-secondary education that do not relate to their education or that they are over qualified for to supplement income while they search for work related to their field of study. This does not build their resume or experience but it is the only route to survive. Gen Y is underemployed for their education.
- One third of all university and college classes are being taught by contract faculty which costs the university 5% of their budget. Meanwhile, full-time faculty benefits are 8% of the budget (information presented by CUPE local at Dalhousie University).
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Pay sessional instructors a fair wage and provide health and dental benefits.**
 - **Immediately stop and reverse trend of overreliance of sessional instructors at post-secondary institutions.**

What You Said About Skills Training

- Some full-time unpaid internships require people to sign contracts stating they won't work anywhere else. This forces people to work under the table to support themselves leaving them precarious in both situations.
- Unpaid internships do not often lead to full time work, resulting in more precarious work after working for no wages.

#GenYAsksY

- STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs often have paid co-ops but social sciences and humanities often do not have that option. Attendees questioned why not, and why the distinction between the fields of study?
- There is a significant skills gap in the skilled trades but as significant a lack of affordable training options and lack of on-the-job training. This is problematic as many skills trades require a certain amount hours of on the job training to receive certification, which is required to work in the field the student trained in.
- Gaps in skills training are forcing people to relocate in order to get the training they need regardless of their desire to stay in Nova Scotia.
- **Possible solution:**
 - **Eliminating unpaid internships in Nova Scotia.**
 - **Create incentives for employers to provide local training opportunities and co-op placements for all fields of study.**

What You Said About Inequality

- Women's work patterns are seen as driven by choice rather than economic necessity.
- Trans folks face added challenges to employment with Trans women facing the highest rate of unemployment. Added barriers for employment range from changing IDs, which is expensive, taxing, and can come with timing limitations, to direct discrimination of Trans folks. Attendees talked about employers solely not wanting visibly Trans works in their workplaces.
- Employment refusal is also about lack of structural supports in a work place to create a safe space to accommodate trans folks. For example, having gender neutral washrooms.
- Racism against black Nova Scotians is still a major barrier in peoples' ability to access employment and in finding full-time work. This is true in the public sector as much as in the private sector.
- **Possible solution:**
 - **Reduce the cost of childcare and increase accessibility through the creation of more childcare spaces to give families a real choice.**
 - **The taxation system must be re-envisioned and recreated to reduce inequality.**

What You Said About Jobs

- Precarious work is not just an urban trend. Lack of jobs in rural communities is forcing people to move to larger urban centres.
- The military is a large employer in Nova Scotia but it targets a very specific demographic – abled-bodied men – and is a very hostile environment for women and LGBTQ folks.

#GenYAsksY

- It is impossible for young people to get into the job market in any meaningful way when jobs require two years of experience for an entry-level job.
- Automation and advancement of technology is eliminating more jobs than they are creating and this is only going to get worse.
- Canada could learn from other countries who work with their labour unions work to create good workplaces and encourage high wage jobs so that people want to work there and want to stay.
- Survival sex work can be directly linked to the lack of employment opportunities in other formal channels for people, particularly Trans folks.
- Criminal record checks are becoming mandatory in all jobs through employment support. In order to apply for a pardon, a fee is required and many unemployed people just don't have the money to apply for the pardon, preventing them from receiving employment support and increasing their chances of finding a job.
- People stay in jobs with terrible working conditions because they do not have other diverse employment options. Moving to a job an identical job will not solve the problem of unsafe or hostile working conditions.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Two-tiered contracts for new and younger workers should be illegal.**
 - **Employment opportunities must be diversified; Government cannot support only a few industries through government incentives and resources.**
 - **Guaranteed minimum income should be considered as way forward to address the automation of labour and un(der)employment.**

What You Said About Government Policy

- Cancellation of the film tax credit has deteriorated the cultural industry in Nova Scotia, one of the remaining economic drivers for Halifax and the greater province.
- There is so much potential for economic growth in the Maritimes but in order to see that potential flourish, governments need to be innovative with investments.
- Tax breaks to corporations don't cut it. We hope that the corporations will stay but they only stay if they receive government subsidies. We have to rethink stimulus and the government needs to use the money themselves. Governments in essence can't pack up and leave, and are accountable to the people, where corporations are only accountable to their stakeholders.
- There has been a lack of science and proper statistics used in policy development for multiple years and driving policy primarily based on ideology is failing Nova Scotians.
- **Possible solution:**
 - **Create policies that encourage or mandate stable local investment**
 - **Government policy and investment must be people-centered and have a focus on building up the local economy and community, example, local procurement policies.**

#GenYAsksY

What You Said About the Impact of Public Services

- Lack of affordable public transit negatively impacts people's ability to access work. Many jobs require reliable transportation to and from the workplace, almost requiring people to have their own a car.
- Precarious work often means no extended health care benefits, costing people thousands of dollars and encouraging people to not treat minor ailments, resulting in more serious and costly problems down the road. This is a particular threat for people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes and results in people quite literally working to live.
- Our public services sectors have lost on the job training. This can result in people being or feeling unqualified to do the jobs they are in. People work in fear that they will mess up something they are not yet able to do and result in catastrophic, career ending situations.
- **Possible solution:**
 - **All levels of government must invest in adequate and affordable public transportation. Low-income peoples' ability to access work depends on it.**
 - **Expand health care coverage to include dental care and prescription medication.**
 - **Ensure investment is made in on the job-training in the public service; if unionized, include minimum amount of training built into local's collective agreement.**

What You Said About Temporary Foreign Workers

- Temporary Foreign Worker Program is the other side of the precarity discussion with whole business models are built off of the reliance of low wage temporary foreign workers.
- Since 2006, Canada has admitted more TFW than immigrants and these workers are unable to bring their families, forcing them to be separated for long periods of time.
- 'Buy local' movements inadvertently can often only support larger farms. Our local food movements must think of the workers and their working conditions in addition to how corporatization and consolidation of farmland prevents people from staying in the industry. Often large agri-business is structured to depend on temporary foreign workers by paying workers so little the business can hardly feel their wages.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Changes to Employment Insurance (EI) must include access for temporary workers. Currently they are paying into the system but aren't able to access the benefits they need to sustain themselves in the off season.**
 - **Immigration should be Canada's focus versus temporary labourers.**

#GenYAsksY

What You Said About Impacts on Lifestyle

- Economic choices of young people are portrayed as lifestyle choices, such as riding a bike, when in reality it is the only affordable option when purchasing a car is so expensive and often unattainable.
- There are cultural assumptions that owning an iPhone means that you can afford the down payment to buy a house. This is a false equivalency and doesn't factor in what is needed immediately in everyday life to succeed.
- Millennials are postponing life milestones that provide life satisfaction – as well as economic stimulus. It isn't surprising that mental health challenges are becoming increasingly common.
- A person in their mid-twenties living with their parents is not making a choice to do so. Their decision is based on lack of economic and employment stability. This reality has financial implications on previous generations.
- Living with parents is also taking its toll on the mental health of millennials. People want to work and be able to supporting themselves but can't because of un(der)employment and crippling student debt.

What Folks from New Brunswick Said

- Youth unemployment is 20-25% in New Brunswick and employment that is available is often seasonal work and low paid labour.
- A lot of people have just given up on searching for work because there aren't any good jobs. Welfare is not enough to survive off of and this is causing people to turn to soup kitchens.
- Concentration of corporate ownership is a major problem in good job creation.
- **Possible solution:**
 - **Government must invest in student and sustainable youth jobs in diverse industries.**
 - **Incentives must be created for employers to hire young people and provide on-the-job training.**