

## PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION REGINA REGIONAL REPORT October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 - Bushwakker Brewpub

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### **What you said about jobs**

- People take temporary jobs with the hopes that they become permanent.
- People are often forced to move between provinces in order to find stable employment.
- It is difficult to find stable employment in the not-for-profit sector. Organizations often have to routinely apply for their funding every 6 months and often don't get enough to meet their financial needs.
- Attendees reported feeling that employees and Millennials are being blamed for the current problems in the job market and industries are not being held accountable. This is a national and global phenomenon.
- The narrative around jobs is one of efficiencies, which has led to a reduction of permanent and full time jobs, rather than creating them.
- With regards to unpaid internships, the federal government is not leading by example.
- If your work is more precarious, you have way more to lose and it is easier to lose what you have. This reality makes it harder to fight for your rights when you are on the margins, struggling to survive.
- Given the evolution of technology, our economy has changed - it is not the same as 20, 30, or 50 years ago. This has resulted in some jobs becoming obsolete. This trend is only going to get worse over time. Technology was supposed to make our lives easier, but in some ways it is making it more difficult.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Ban all federally regulated workplace unpaid internships.**
  - **Establish a moratorium on internships and work placements being an academic requirement for any PSE degrees, until those work placements can ensure to be paid placements.**
  - **Governments must find creative and innovative solutions that can address the impacts of technological evolutions on the economy. This can be partially addressed by providing fully accessible education and training for highly skilled positions that are dependent on technological changes.**

## What you said about education

- Student debt forces people to put their lives on pause. Student debt has reached unprecedented levels.
- High tuition fees and debt were mentioned as a major barrier to reaching life milestones, such as buying a home and starting a family.
- Interest on student debt has a significant impact on young people and keeps them in cycles of precarity. For example, people will take and stay in precarious situations to be able to make their debt payment. Additionally, people in low-waged precarious positions may not be able to make a payment towards their debt; therefore they will continue to accrue more and more debt.
- It is no longer the case that a post-secondary education is the route for a better, more secure life for people and their families. This particularly impacts low-income earners as they often have to take on debt to be able to afford their education.
- Our education system is working for those that can afford the cost up front - those people are getting a leg up. Other people are worse off after taking on debt to get an education.
- Post-secondary institutions have seen an increase of precarity on campus. What once were stable well-paying jobs are becoming more and more low-waged and temporary. This is affecting the quality of education students are receiving.
- There has been a 38% decline of indigenous learners on campus because the funding from the PSSSP hasn't kept up with the demand. Education is a treaty right and the federal government is not delivering what it has promised to.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Abolish the national student loan program and replace it with grants.**
  - **The federal government must play a role in ensuring a free, equitable, and accessible post-secondary education.**
  - **Uphold Indigenous, Metis, and Inuit students' treaty right to PSE. Lift the cap on the PSSSP and inject the program immediately with the necessary funds to ensure that all students who want to get an education can get funding to do so.**
  - **Support all students in every faculty, industry and all PSE institutions, not solely a select "deserving" few.**

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## What you said about social services

- An attendee described the changes to the EI system as needing to basically be shackled to your computer at all times searching for work. He felt like the system treats unemployed workers like lazy criminals and operates under the assumption that the unemployed are trying to cheat the system.
- Liberal EI changes favour people that are in the upper-middle and middle class.
- The EI system doesn't work for young people. The federal government must do more to make sure that people who are underemployed and hold precarious jobs have access to the system.
- Two-tiered pension systems cause resentment amongst the Millennials.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Offer paid training for people who go to school for trades.**
  - **Establish agreements with the provinces where students, who are studying in the trades, get access to EI while they are in school.**
  - **Ensure that all co-op placements and internships are paid.**
  - **Through legislation, ban two-tiered contracts.**
  - **Ensure a universal threshold for qualifying for Employment Insurance that is low enough to account for Canada's current precarious employment reality. The proposed threshold is 360 hours.**
  - **End regional discrepancies in EI benefits.**

## What you said about government policy

- The provincial government is attacking labour through legislation.
- The TFWP is really impacting the economy in Saskatchewan.
- An attendee, who is a registered nurse that migrated from Belize, talked about the high fees and length of time it takes to transfer over accreditation to Canada. These professionals have to pay two sets of fees: once in their home country and again in Canada. While people wait for the documentation to be assessed, people are forced to work in low-wage and precarious labour to survive. They also have no access to student loans, so upgrading skills while waiting for their accreditation is extremely difficult.
- Mental health supports, such as a therapist or psychiatrist, as well as the cost of medication for mental health challenges, are very high and inaccessible.
- We need to support all aspects of health within our public system.
- People are working more and more to provide a moderately comfortable life for themselves, to have access to benefits, and to have the ability to financially

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support a family. However, despite people working more, that is translating to less and less.

- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Create a Federal Post-Secondary Education Act.**
  - **Implement a national pharmacare program.**
  - **Place a moratorium on the Temporary Foreign Workers Program.**
  - **Establish a national mental health plan so that mental health treatment is universally covered.**
  - **Take collective action in our workplaces, such as supporting the unionization of precarious workplaces.**

### What you said about discrimination & inequality

- Precarity is compounded when you are a person of colour, a woman, a person living with a disability, etc.
- Young Indigenous people are coming to Regina for education. However, a six week employment skills program doesn't provide people with enough skills to fully participate in the labour force or in life in a new community – we can't only focus on employment skills.
- Indigenous communities are dealing with racism, community isolation, impacts of colonization and residential schools.
- One attendee talked about people they knew that ended their life due to the immense challenges Indigenous youth face.
- Attendees expressed frustration that Millennials are the first generation since the industrial revolution that are going to be worse off than the previous generation.
- Class was key to the analysis of the problems that attendees expressed and it needs to be the foundation for solutions.
- We must structure our economy to be based on full time permanent positions rather than part time, temporary, or contract work.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Current funding for programs is not sufficient; we need comprehensive programs that teach people life skills in addition to employment skills.**
  - **Provide mandatory anti-oppression training at places of employment.**
  - **The federal government must engage in true reconciliation immediately.**

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## What you said about Millennial myths

- The narrative that Millennials have been fed our whole life – that if you work hard, you can get what you want – seems more myth than reality. Millennials are really struggling. There is a strong sense of hopelessness in being able to change our reality as Millennials.
- There were many Gen X'ers in attendance to speak about their concerns for their kids. They are surprised at how much has been dumped on Millennials and how much Millennials can take.
- The Millennial generation has graduates with the highest levels of debt, the least job options available, and a housing market that is mostly out of reach.

## What you said about the normalcy of precarious work

- Attendees asked if temporary, part-time, and contract work are type of jobs being created in the public sector, where are the good jobs?
- Governments need to move away from the corporatization of our public service. The public sector needs to treat workers with dignity and respect and get back to why the public service was created in the first place: to serve the people and the community.
- There have been numerous lay-offs in the healthcare industry. This is a local example of the casualization of jobs in the public service.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Ensure that 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.**
  - **Ban two-tiered contracts.**

## What you said about impact on personal life

- Young people are having a hard time finding stable employment in the same region as their partner. One attendee talked about her daughter, who is an engineer who had to move to Hong Kong and Belgium to find work. Her daughter wants to settle down, but can't find a job in the same city as her partner.
- We are seeing a drastic change in the nature of work. Jobs are moving online or are being outsourced to anywhere in the world. For example, "content mills" in the writing community. A writer can bid for work, but they can be outbid by people working in countries where the currency is a 10th of Canada's currency.

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- Attendees asked, “How do people compete?” The answer is, “You can't.” Maclean’s and most of the major publishers use these content mills.
- When people move between provinces for a job, they feel a disconnect from where they want to be (their home province) and where the jobs are.
- Exploitation is a huge concern for people in precarious work. For example, servers being forced to pay for walk outs by their employers. Attendees stated that they have often seen employers who do not follow labour laws.
- Precarity has a strong connection to mental health challenges. As an attendee put it, it is the "the stress of not knowing how I am going to pay rent next month."
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **The cost of a job search should be able to be written off, including travelling for a job interview, mileage, transportation, cost of accommodation, business attire, etc.**
  - **Governments must provide structural support to enforce labour laws.**