

PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION SASKATOON REGIONAL REPORT October 8th, 2016 - UFCW Local 1400 Hall

What you said about how precarious work impacts your life

- The average age in Saskatoon is under 30.
- Millennials are over-educated and underemployed. The general perception at the meeting was "how many degrees do I need for someone to take me seriously?" The message that Millennials often get from boomers is "you are obviously not trying hard enough. The reality is, Millennials are working just as hard as any other generation and to continue to live in a precarious condition".
- In the service industry there is an unbalanced power-dynamic where employers often hold all the power.
- Attendees expressed the sentiment that employers want to be able to call the employee whenever they need. This diminishes workers ability to participate in volunteer opportunities or internships that could benefit them in the future because the employee needs to be available full-time for a part-time job.
- An attendee relayed a personal example where their colleague at the time was working as a dishwasher for 5 years in a restaurant. There was an expectation that he take as much time as necessary to complete his work, but the employer would stop paying him at a set time, often before the work was finished.
- Often servers have to work 2-3 jobs because they don't get enough hours at only one restaurant, which requires a delicate coordination of two business's schedules.
- Millennials want to be self-sufficient, but the system does not allow them to, due to the compounding factors on top of already precarious working situations.
- **Proposed solutions:**
 - **Create incentives for employers to provide workplace training opportunities and co-op placements for all fields of study.**
 - **Create and invest into jobs and skills programs specifically tailored to unemployed youth who are not able to attend post-secondary education.**

What you said about government policy

- Between 2008 and 2009, housing prices have sky-rocketed and since then, they have not gone down. People can't afford their homes. On top of that, the provincial government is cutting funding of affordable housing.
 - Universal benefits need to be part of any job.
 - The privatization of our public services needs to stop.
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- Attendees were concerned about the treatment of workers that come to Saskatchewan through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and fear that a significant amount of abuse takes place.
- Legislation is important for worker protection, but the government often times opposes unions. It is imperative that the government takes action to encourage unionization and fair collective bargaining.
- **Proposed solutions:**
 - **We need legislation that imposes higher fines for corporations that break our labour laws.**
 - **A moratorium on the TFWP while working to ensure that there is a clear and timely pathway to citizenship for TFWs.**
 - **Establish and implement a national housing strategy.**
 - **Develop national pharmacare, dental care, child care and mental health strategies, complete with the necessary funding to effectively implement the respective strategies.**
 - **Free and universal public transit across the country.**

What you said about Jobs

- The Canada Summer Job Program oftentimes does not align with school breaks in the spring/summer. For students to be able to take advantage of the program, they often have to negotiate large gaps before the job starts in the spring and finishes in the summer where they can't take on other employment.
- For programs like the Canada Summer Jobs Programs, the government needs to set firm deadlines when people can start and finish them.
- Young people need a federal job program that is available year-round. Working only in the summer isn't enough to support the high cost of education and living.
- Attendees shared stories of the tactics that businesses use in order to avoid paying their employees benefits. For example, Walmart has multiple part-time employees, but consciously does not give them enough hours, so Walmart is not legally obligated to pay benefits.
- Attendees expressed the sentiment that the narrative around employment and workplace culture is one where employees have an enormous responsibility to employers but employers have little to no responsibility towards their employees. For example, a company such as Sobeys would request an employee to be available to work for 20 hours. However, the reality is that they only call employees to work between 10 to 15 hours.
- Attendees felt that our current employment system relies on the exploitation of workers.
- An attendee expressed a lot of stress and fear for falling ill. "If I get sick on the wrong day, I fear that I will lose my job."
- If an employee requests time off for appointments or gets pregnant, they can lose their job without any real tangible recourse.

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- Millennials often find themselves working multiple jobs in order to make ends meet.
- Millennials are losing hope of obtaining stable jobs. An attendee shared their story about watching her parents slowly being pushed into precarious work, “How can we hope to have a stable job when our parents are also struggling with the same challenge?”
- Unpaid internships are now more common than paid training. Millennials will face dire consequences if this situation continues to be the norm. Companies are becoming wealthier, but this wealth is not utilized to compensate workers appropriately or invest in their staffing and training.
- **Proposed solutions:**
 - **Create a jobs program designed for youth that is available all year long.**
 - **Employment standards must be updated to ensure that part-time and contract workers receive equal pay for equal work and equal access to benefits.**
 - **Put an end to all unpaid internships.**

What you said about education

- Today, the minimum requirement for any job is an undergraduate degree.
- If Millennials need a minimum of a bachelor’s degree to access the job market, then post-secondary education needs to become more accessible.
- The cost of education is increasing and has become a heavy burden that many Millennials can’t get out from under. Education should be treated as a public good.
- The cultural devaluation of an arts degree needs to stop. The narrative surrounding the economy is narrowing too much, solely valuing commerce and STEM degrees over social studies and humanities degrees. This adds additional difficulties for arts graduates looking for work and the derogatory narrative isn’t rooted in reality.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
 - **Eliminate barriers to accessing post-secondary education, such as tuition fees.**
 - **Transition the Canada Student Loans Program to an up-front system of needs-based grants.**

What you said about workplace safety

- Some workers are more vulnerable to workplace violence than others, such as late or overnight shift workers. Employers must put in place additional safeguards to protect workers in these situations.
- We need accountability mechanisms for employers; self-regulation is making precarious work dangerous.

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- There is a connection between precarious work and dangerous work. Our labour laws and systems to hold employers accountable need to reflect this reality.
- **Proposed solutions:**
 - **Amend current labour laws to ensure that all-night employers have more than one person on duty at night, as proposed by the Alberta Federation of Labour.**
 - **Ensure that workers in precarious jobs are educated about the risks and dangers they encounter through training sessions provided by their employer.**

What you said about local challenges

- There is an assumption that if a person has access to the internet then they have a phone and vice-versa. Sometimes that is not the case in smaller towns or in the North. This can present significant job search challenges.
- In smaller towns and in the north, oftentimes people need to travel one hour to get to work. Smaller town and northern services are constantly under threat of closing.

What you said about collective action

- Precarious jobs are unpredictable and that creates a substantial amount of stress and fear. It reduces capacity for advocacy and the ability to mobilize towards collective action. People are afraid to stand up for their rights or take any action to ensure that their rights are respected, because they are afraid of losing the little things they have.
- Collective action is difficult for people living in precarious conditions.
- From attendees' personal experience, employers often insisted that employees not talk to the unions about their working conditions.
- Free Trade Agreements are a significant factor in exacerbating the rise of precarious work.
- It is difficult for unions, when employers have all the power and businesses face no repercussions for their actions. This includes but is not limited to being legislated back to work by provincial and federal governments.
- **Proposed solutions:**
 - **Re-negotiate Free-Trade Agreements with other countries so that they are fairer for working people of our country.**
 - **Provide more education for employees on workers' rights provided by unions and/or the employer.**