

## PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

### ST. JOHN'S REGIONAL REPORT

June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 – The Quidi Vidi Boathouse

---

#### On youth un(der)employment you said

- Youth un(der)employment rate is 27.7 percent, if part-time employees seeking full-time jobs; unpaid interns; and discouraged young Canadians are taken into account.
- Roughly 40 percent of Canadians aged 25-34 with a university degree are overqualified for their current position.
- **Proposed solutions: The Canadian Federation of Students have put forward a robust youth employment strategy, including creating a new Workplace Employee Survey to improve Canada's labour market information; innovative ways to support and encourage employer-provided training; re-establishing funding for paid federal student internships and paid summer employment opportunities; and doubling funding to the Youth Employment Strategy (YES).**

#### On unpaid internships you said

- Young people are forced to take on unpaid work as a way to “get a foot in the door” within their respective industries.
- It is estimated that there are upwards of 300,000 unpaid internships per year across Canada.
- Student practicum placements are more likely to be unpaid in women-dominated fields like social work, nursing, or teaching.
- Employer's reliance on unpaid work further reduces the availability of entry-level jobs and provides employers with a disincentive for investing in on-the-job training.
- **Proposed solution: Unpaid internships should be completely eliminated at the federal level.**

#### On childcare you said

- Women are disproportionately affected by lack of childcare options.
- St. John's has incredibly high childcare fees especially compared to average household incomes. In 2015 on average, monthly preschool childcare fees in St. John's were \$857. Only those earning less than \$30,000 qualify for provincial childcare subsidies. Federal support isn't enough to make childcare affordable in the province and without a cap on childcare fees, any support will continue to be devalued. Three-quarters of children in the province can't access childcare and there is no plan provincially or federally to create more childcare spaces.
- The provincial budget eliminated transportation subsidies for low income parents and cut 16% of the childcare budget. “It's going to take years to recover from this.”
- The provincial government is pushing for a population growth strategy. However, not being discussed are social supports to help with childcare, crippling student debt, etc. That doesn't make sense.

## #GenYAsksY

- Equal parental leave helps equalize relationships. In two-parent families it is usually the parent with the lowest income who takes leave and often that is women. This creates financial dependence and unbalanced relationships with women more likely to depend financially on their partners. For each child, a woman's income is estimated to decrease 6-7%.
- A robust system of parental leave has the potential to create better family policies at work; address the pay gap and female participation in the workforce; balance the workload at home; and challenge gender stereotypes.
- Parental leave is not unemployment.
- Employment positions can get cut when workers go on maternity leave making it difficult for workers to accrue enough hours to qualify for EI in the future.
- People can't get the educational opportunities that they need if they don't have childcare needs met.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **\$15 a day childcare policy is a good first step.**
  - **Childcare leave must be separated from the Employment Insurance Program.**
  - **Childcare supports must be holistic and include meaningful support and opportunity for men to take parental leave, and support for parents with children who have special needs.**
  - **Any extension of maternity and parental leave benefits must include additional financial resources.**

### On homecare you said

- Live-in homecare workers get paid for 8 hour workdays, despite actually working around the clock. Most don't have health and other benefits or a pension plan.
- There are two distinct streams for homecare workers and criticisms with both:
  - Government subsidized workers make \$12.25/hr.
  - Private home care employees work shifts that are inconsistent and employers must pay extra to have them qualify for workers' compensation.
- The emotional care that home care workers provide is under-recognized and uncompensated.
- The TFWP disproportionately benefits those employers who already have access to wealth.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **National homecare strategy**
  - **Newcomers should be able to come to Canada and have the same rights and wages as all other Canadians.**

### On 'Generation Squeeze' you said

- If 74% of the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians make less than \$50,000, who is middle class? When factoring in the cost of housing, food, transportation, student debt, etc. we can see that inequality is the new norm.
- The difference between being working class and middle class is how many paycheques you are from welfare.
- Already burdened with student debt, young people are forced into low-waged employment with bad working conditions.

# #GenYAsksY

- Many millennials are moving back in with their parents to help ease the burden of childcare and heavy debt levels.
- Many millennials aren't able to turn to their parents and grandparents for financial support, especially because many seniors are returning to work to supplement their own incomes. With seniors in the workforce they aren't available to help with childcare for grandchildren.
- Young people try to contribute solutions but aren't being taken seriously by government.

## On out-migration you said

- People have to go away for training and experience but still can't find a job in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Without a teaching specialization it can take up to 10 years to secure a permanent full-time job in the province. Teachers have to travel far to secure work or permanently move away from their families. In schools, class sizes have increased (upwards of thirty students) and have integrated split-grade classrooms. These changes put a significant strain on teachers.
- Changes to EI are making it hard to stay in the province.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Support local innovation and local economies.**
  - **Create incentives for employers to provide local training opportunities.**

## On rising inequality & exploitation you said

- People are working two or three jobs because they aren't getting enough hours.
- Consolidation of wealth is driving changes in the way people work, including the way work is scheduled (including unpaid work and zero hour contracts).
- Temp agencies lack acceptable health and safety standards. Often workers are kept on as "temporary" employees in the agency well beyond what should be considered temporary including 15-20 years.
- There are increasing levels of exploitation for new immigrant workers who often lack meaningful employment choice. For example, one speaker described employers withholding passports. There must be a legislative mechanism to prevent this type of exploitation and a concrete plan with the necessary resources for enforcement.
- Basic Income was brought up as a solution to precarity however people all around the table were very concerned about how Liberal or Conservatives governments would establish the social program and what necessary social programs would be cut.
- **Possible solutions:**
  - **Workers need \$15/hour to survive.**
  - **Bill of rights for self-employed**

## On provincial austerity measures you said

- Provincial austerity measures will increase inequality and out-migration.
- "The government is accounting, not governing."
- Austerity and cuts in Newfoundland and Labrador have people feeling "demotivated" and "gutted."
- In its pre-budget rhetoric, the provincial government emphasized that "it's never been this bad," in order to brace residents for the austerity measures to come. But the budget is not giving the province anything hopeful to move toward.

## #GenYAsksY

- Austerity is presented as enviable when nothing could be further from the truth. These are political choices and a reflection of the current government's priorities.
- As a province, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have to ask themselves, "What do we want our province to look like?" Currently there is no messaging around creative options, vision, or hope. A fiscal surplus is the only explicit goal advanced by the current provincial government.
- We need to challenge the mythology that we have a bloated public service. Governments are only looking at public service numbers instead of finding creative ways to retool the workforce. As well, there is no unifying rationale to the downsizing. Program cuts are piecemeal. Job cuts only create unemployment and poverty, which costs the state much more in the long run.
- Cuts to the public service often lead to the newest employees being cut first, which tend to disproportionately impact young workers.
- Resources aren't available for all children that want them (e.g.: intensive core French). This impacts future work opportunities.
- Provincial cuts to the Student Work and Service Program (SWASP) and the Graduate Transition to Employment Program (GTEP) significantly impact millennial workers.
- Artists live very precarious lives. The arts are so significant to the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador and are an economic driver of the province but the arts need more public funding. The province should fund shared community spaces for artists to support stable places for artists to work.

### **On community organising you said**

- We need to maintain a common front of progressive ideals, relationships, and solidarity in both the good and the bad times.