

## PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

### VANCOUVER REGIONAL REPORT

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

- There is a lot of precarity in the immigration system, as it also applies to international students.
- Young international students often come to study in Canada due to human rights abuses in their home country, but once they arrive in Canada they face tuition fees that are three times more than what domestic students pay and there is no limit to how much tuition fees can go up from one year to the next. As such, they are forced to work multiple casual jobs to make ends meet.
- Many international students want to pursue permanent residency, but the federal government has not been clear on the measures it will take to facilitate this.
- Workers are blamed for their lack of skills, but workforce skills training is often not available. The high cost of education keeps training out of reach for many people.
- University is perceived as a gateway to a better life, but it is becoming a barrier due to crippling debt and lack of employment.
- Millennials are attracted by or pushed into precarious work sectors like non-profit, tech, creative economy, etc.
- Attendees reported not being able to dream of owning a home, or even having children, because precarious work doesn't provide access to a stable income or parental leave outside of the Employment Insurance system, for those who can access it.
- Attendees expressed concerns that young people are not aware of all the career options that are available to them and of the changing nature of work in many industries.
- Education in social sciences, humanities, and the arts are often devalued, therefore funding options that are available to students are inadequate, unstable, or non-existent.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Need to move away from project based arts funding to something more sustainable, such as the minimum income paid to artists in France.**
  - **Adopt a cap on international student tuition fees.**
  - **Reduce tuition fees and adopt a federal cap on tuition fees to eliminate discrepancies amongst provinces.**

## **On essential care services you said**

- There are multiple barriers preventing women from accessing childcare, including long wait-lists, costs and requirements such as needing a credit card to be placed on a wait-list.
- In its current form, the live-in caregiver program is ineffective and harmful. It caters only to affluent families that can afford it. Migrant women who partake in the program are forced to leave their home and family behind to settle in a new community. The average separation time from their families is about 5 years. As a result, they struggle with the trauma of family separation.
- There are too few mental health services. Affordability is a major concern as well. As a result, those unable to work due to mental health issues cannot secure a sustainable source of income.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Work with the provinces to implement a National Day Care plan that would see low-cost daycare spaces across the country.**
  - **Implement a national mental health strategy, including a significant reduction in the cost for psychiatrists and psychologists.**

## **On the Temporary Foreign Worker Program you said**

- The Temporary Foreign Worker Program has impacted the ability of youth to go into and succeed in the education system.
- Temporary Foreign Workers have to wait for a new permit in order to go to a new workplace. Since it can take a long time to obtain a new permit, they are forced to work odd jobs with no contract, no labour protections and no Employment Insurance in between the permits in order to make enough money to live.
- **Proposed solution:**
  - **Call for a moratorium on the Temporary Foreign Workers Program and significant reforms to stop abuses of it.**

## **On the impact of precarity on workers' personal lives you said**

- Precarious and temporary work makes workers feel second class, since they always have to perform in order to be called back.
- In all precarious working situations, workers are always on standby to be called in for work. This creates barriers for them to be able to be involved in their community. It suppresses political engagement and negatively affects their personal life.
- People in precarious work often don't see themselves as being in a precarious situation - they are surviving and are willing to do whatever is necessary to get a call back, or to get that second contract.

## On the social safety net you said

- The existing social safety net, including Employment Insurance, is not tailored to the current reality; it is based on the assumption that people are in standard workplace relationships.
- As a result of monthly health premiums and lack of on-the-job coverage, access to healthcare is very limited in BC.
- The Urban Worker Project survey has demonstrated that access to health and dental plans are peoples' #1 priority.
- **Proposed solution:**
  - **Provincial health care plans should increase coverage to include dental care, eye care and pharmaceuticals.**

## On rising inequality & exploitation you said

- BC is the only province that does not have a distinct poverty-reduction strategy.
- Immigrant workers' accreditation is often not recognized and obtaining the necessary accreditation in Canada is extremely costly and time consuming. As a result, they are kept in low skilled employment and often have to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, despite the education they received in their home country.
- There is a lack of labour protections as a result of the *Employment Standards Act* having been gutted by the current and previous provincial governments, as well as federal labour laws being eroded.
- This has led to several negative impacts, like workers' protections being diminished, their rights being denied and a higher degree of difficulty and risk when it comes to forming a union.
- Employers are misclassifying employees as independent contractors, in order to avoid having any responsibilities towards their employees.
- Labour laws do not offer sufficient protections. The laws that do offer protections are typically not well followed.
- **Proposed solutions:**
  - **Establish stronger labour standards through legislation.**
  - **Facilitate union forming through card checks and automatic certification.**
  - **Move away from benefits which are tied to an employer, as they tie the employee to the employer.**
  - **Adopt income averaging for precarious, freelance sectors with respect to taxation.**
  - **Establish workplace training to help people learn what their rights are and how to exercise them.**

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## On housing you said

- Housing is a huge issue for international students because they are unfamiliar with some of the local housing options and can be easily taken advantage of.
- These international students can also face racism and discrimination when seeking housing.
- As a result of weak residential legislation that do not protect tenants from unmanageable rental increases and low vacancy rates, people often have to work multiple jobs just to pay for housing.
- **Proposed solution:**
  - **Establish a national standard that imposes a rent cap.**
  - **Provincial investments in new and affordable housing stocks, with a focus on groups most marginalized by the current housing crisis. The federal government has a key role to play in ensuring affordable housing options.**

## On community organising you said

- People in precarious work do not see themselves as being in a precarious situation. As a result, they don't have a shared understanding or a shared language. This makes it difficult to unite around the issue.
- Precarious work is appearing in previously stable work environments, like the public sector and even in unionized environments. This weakens labour unions and our ability to organize our workplaces.