

PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

WINNPEG REGIONAL REPORT

October 6th, 2016 – Millennium Public Library

What you said about youth unemployment & jobs

- Soon we will have 3 generations in the workplace at the same time. This means fewer jobs will be open to youth.
- People are in debt so they have to continue working longer. As a result, millennials are either unemployed, or in jobs that aren't building the proper skill set needed for their careers.
- Competitive wages create a stable work environment with stable staff, but competition amongst business growth has been driving down wages.
- The quality of work is degrading across the board and media creates a misleading image of the context of Canadian employment by creating a false image of job creation, especially since new jobs have only been created in some industries.
- Precarious work affects employers too: the need to constantly hire and train people as people leave for better jobs. This costs a great deal to employers.
- The chances of getting stable employment or a workplace pension are slimming.
- Workers are concerned about the effects of mechanization. Attendees asked, what happens to the people who lose their jobs to machines? Do we need a shift in mentality from "efficiency" to more people-focused workplaces?
- Precarious work is becoming a strategy for businesses for entry-level work. It pits workers against each other and forces them to compete with each other for few stable jobs.
- Long-term, permanent jobs are becoming fewer and fewer so people are forced to take on multiple part-time positions or engage in free lancing or project-based work.
- In light of difficult economic contexts, employers are maintaining the status quo rather than adjusting their practices by reducing benefits and not increasing employee protection. Employers do not proactively anticipate economic difficulty and as a result are reactive in their approaches to economic downturns.
- We need to assess how climate change will affect Millennials' and how it can be used as an opportunity for job creation.
- We need solutions to help bring young workers into industries like farming. For those who aren't born into the industry, consolidation is a huge barrier to being able to get their foot in the door.
- An economy based on capitalism and globalization is not producing jobs for young people. It is creating a cycle of economic stagnation in which jobs are shipped overseas.

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- The issue of employment is tougher for Indigenous and racialized youth. Some reports have demonstrated that Indigenous youth are three times more likely to find themselves in precarious work.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Adopt a strategy which approaches issues of employment at the intersections of class, race, and gender so that workers are united rather than pitted against each other.**
 - **Legislate innovative policies with the goal of reducing inequality. For example, policies that limit the employer making more than 14 times the bottom level employee.**
 - **Encourage larger corporations to create youth employment programs and youth training programs.**
 - **Provide incentives and funding opportunities for small businesses to create youth specific positions that include opportunities for training and developing key skill sets.**
 - **Federal strategy that can effectively address youth debt including both public and private debt.**
 - **Encourage corporations to invest in sustainable solutions and use these solutions as opportunities for job creation, co-op placements and skill development options for youth.**
 - **Encourage businesses to reduce the precarity of entry-level positions, focusing on the benefits of investing in youth skill development for both large and small businesses.**
 - **Governments must invest in student and sustainable youth jobs in diverse industries.**

What you said about education

- Students from rural Manitoba are required to move to Winnipeg to get an education. However, paying for housing, tuition fees, and living expenses can be difficult, especially for full-time students.
- Given these financial difficulties, including the lack of permanent or full time employment opportunities after graduation, post-secondary education does not feel like a good personal investment.
- In order to carry the heavy financial burden of post-secondary education, students are forced to take on part-time employment.
- If students are able to find work, it often comes in the form of part-time contracts. It can be difficult to find a job that suits a full-time school schedule while still paying enough to cover all the costs.
- Although post-secondary education is increasingly a necessity, students are hesitant to consider post-secondary education because of its unaffordability—worsened by tuition increases—and their justified aversion to debt.
- Students sometimes need to take a break from their studies to move back home and work multiple jobs to be able to make enough money to return to school.

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- The barriers to receiving a post-secondary education are even higher for students with disabilities.
- Grants and student loans are not currently a viable, sustainable, or dependable solution.
- Loans and grants do not cover the costs of obtaining skills training.
- Systems of eligibility for financial aid/loans appear to be stacked against students. For instance, for most public student loans, students are considered dependents of their parents, with parents' income factored into the eligibility criteria. Loan eligibility criteria assumes the nature of familial relationships, including an assumption that students are able to live with their parents. As a result, many students are forced to take on debt from banks, where interest rates are higher.
- Public loans can be a source of anxiety; often students do not get confirmation that they will in fact receive the loan until they are already attending classes.
- Loans are increasingly difficult to pay off. Some students are forced to work full time and study only part-time to be able to make enough money to pay for their studies or to begin paying off their loans.
- Members of older generations, including employers, need to be encouraged to abandon the, "well I did it so why can't you?" mentality and recognize that young workers today experience different barriers than did workers in past generations.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Create programs which mimic those that already exist in Nordic countries, in which seniors house students in exchange for chores and support in the home. This allows seniors to have the help they need, and students to avoid having to be subject to high housing prices.**
 - **Ensure free and accessible education for all Canadians and international students.**
 - **Increase to the number of co-op and trade internships for people in a range of industries.**
 - **Facilitate a needed change in attitude toward young workers.**

What you said about unpaid internships

- Currently, 2-3 years of experience is required for entry-level jobs. This requirement pushes young workers to seek unpaid internships.
- It is estimated that there are 300,000 unpaid internships nation-wide, with an additional 200,000 required for academic credit.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Eliminating all federally-run unpaid internships.**
 - **Create incentives for employers to roll co-op positions into full-time or permanent positions that youth can access in the summer or after they have completed their degree.**

What you said about the social safety net

- Millennials are taking longer and longer to access a workplace pension. This is likely to affect retirement security.
- There is a need for a fully funded childcare system that takes a holistic approach to childcare. Members of Generation X tend to have the double responsibility of caring, emotionally and financially, for their children and for their aging parents. This unpaid care giving work is often not acknowledged or accommodated by employers, forcing them to leave the work force.
- Newcomer children with limited English or French language abilities are placed in classrooms with no language training, where they are expected to keep up with dominant-language speakers. This causes frustration amongst young students, contributes to high dropout rates, and dramatically increases the vulnerability of these children.
- Canada lacks the social infrastructure to help people transition into the Canadian economy – policies must be people-centered.
- The current threshold of 910 hours for EI is unattainable for young workers. We need to create systems which helps people join the workforce, not punish them for not being in the workforce.
- Manitoba healthcare doesn't cover birth control. An attendee spoke about having to choose between paying her hydro bill or for her birth control. This puts people in a very precarious position, especially young, low-income women.
- Access to dental care is a huge issue. There is no funding for prevention based dental care.
- People are on social assistance so that they are able to receive help with drug costs, dental, and glasses, but if they leave social assistance they will no longer get that support. The system punishes people trying to improve their livelihoods.
- We need a social support system that encourages kids to reach, not teaching them to try to lie and cheat the system to just improve their life.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Develop a strategy to stabilize access to pensions for all Canadians, including banning two-tiered workplace pensions.**
 - **Adoption of a national childcare strategy that focuses on drastically reducing the cost of childcare across the country and increasing the number of childcare spaces in order for parents and caregivers to have more choices around childcare.**
 - **Investment into language training, affordable housing, education, and skills training to ensure that immigrant families and their children are supported.**
 - **Adoption of a more inclusive system of Employment Insurance (EI).**
 - **Implement a progressive system of Basic Income.**

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- **Access to medicine, glasses, dental care must be considered a human right. Federal and provincial governments must create structural changes that increase access to health care.**
- **Create government policy around access to affordable housing.**
- **Create a national pharma-care program.**

What you said about the Temporary Foreign Workers Program

- Employers have a responsibility to provide safe and healthy workplaces for all workers, yet TFWs and other migrant workers are being pitted against Canadian workers through racist and otherwise divisive ideologies.
- TFWs are living within significant economic, social and political constraints including an inability to vote in Canadian elections.
- TFWs don't have access to EI and many other social services even though they pay into them.
- **Possible Solutions:**
 - **Moratorium on the TFW Program.**
 - **Immigration and permanent residence should be Canada's focus instead of a reliance on precarious temporary labour programs.**
 - **Suitable housing and wages must be provided for all migrant workers.**

What you said about responsible government

- Governments need to ask themselves whether its employment model is helping or hurting people.
- Public institutions are increasingly becoming top heavy. Salaries of top-ranking administrators are increasing while the benefits and salaries of workers in frontline services are decreasing. All levels of government are increasingly relying on precarious labour for frontline services.
- Public sector can create jobs while ensuring environmental sustainability.
- Governments at all levels are applying business mentality to public service (i.e.: talking about having flexibility, working part time, efficiency etc.).
 - Example 1: At the municipal level, the Winnipeg library is run by precarious workers, who are guaranteed only 10 hours of work a week.
 - Example 2: At the municipal level, waste collection in Winnipeg has been privatized. The company running the service hires and fires people every single day. When jobs in waste collection were covered by CUPE 500, they were full-time stable jobs.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **The public sector needs to de-commodify public services.**
 - **Adopt the principles of the Leap Manifesto in the public sector.**
 - **Provide additional financial and infrastructural support for frontline work.**

What you said about community organising

- Governments and the public sector need to interact with communities to support initiatives that promote the creation of economic opportunities.
- Newcomers and Indigenous folks are coming together in Winnipeg through community organizing, with Millennials as a driving force.
- For example, Red Rising, a unique Winnipeg initiative and is a local, Indigenous, grassroots, non-profit funded through donations. It provides a media outlet that highlights the voice of Indigenous people and their frustrations. This is an important example of how young people need to create these projects for themselves because they are not seeing these spaces through the corporate media or through CBC. This publication started because people felt that there were no other options available to them.
- **Possible solutions:**
 - **Provide incentives for corporations and government to support and work with local youth and community initiatives while maintaining the autonomy of the initiative.**
 - **Stop the attack on charitable organizations by providing sustainable funding for not-for-profits. This allows organizations to fulfill their mandate and create new jobs.**
 - **Increase government grants for community based initiatives without emphasizing financial outputs of the organization. The priority should be community well-being.**
 - **Create additional government grants for community based arts initiatives and projects.**
 - **Encourage or mandate stable local investment.**