Election Connections: Ask the Candidates

Work with Dignity: Precarious Employment

Questions for Candidates

- How will your party work with provincial colleagues to improve employment standards?
- Will your party ensure the Expert Panel on Modern Federal Labour Standards continues its work, and will you give due consideration to their recommendations when they are released?
- How will your party address the issue of race being the most common form of discrimination for workers in precarious employment?

Why Ask These Questions?

From its earliest years, The United Church of Canada has spoken out on poverty and the related issues of decent work for decent pay. In the year 2000, the Moderator’s Consultation on Faith and the Economy concluded that “the economy is the way we love one another collectively.”

Our Roman Catholic siblings tell us, “Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers”).

Background

Precarious work—unstable and lacking predictable income, sick pay, benefits, and pension—has been an expanding feature of the Canadian labour market. Precarious workers come in all age groups. The 2016 census revealed that, for the first time since comparable data was collected, less than one in two jobs in Canada is a full-time and full-year job.

Full-time permanent employment is out of reach for far too many millennials—people born between 1982 and 1997. The Generation Effect documents the numerous social consequences of precarious employment, from more frequent mental health and anxiety concerns to challenges in forming relationships and engaging in one’s community. This report cites the lack of full-time jobs and housing as the two biggest challenges for their generation (McMaster University Faculty of Social Sciences).

The cost of living, taxes, and good jobs and wages are three of the top six issues in a recent Abacus Data poll. Candidates will once again be promising financial prosperity in the form of employment and lower taxes while not addressing underlying issues that result in employees having their dignity compromised, rights denied, and wages reduced or withheld.

People need full-time work with decent pay and ideally benefits that enable them to house and feed themselves and their families. This goal is becoming increasingly hard to meet as part-time, contract, and temporary jobs become the norm for many people.

Indigenous, racialized, and new residents of Canada face discrimination and multiple barriers that regularly place them in unstable work. The most commonly reported experiences of discrimination for workers in precarious
employment relate to their race, age, gender, and immigration status, with race being the most common. Women and people of colour are disproportionately overrepresented at the most precarious end of the continuum in the Canadian workforce.

Learn More

Abacus Data poll on 2019 election issues: https://abacusdata.ca/election-2019-is-a-battle-to-define-the-agenda

The Generation Effect: Millenials, employment precarity and the 21st century workplace: https://pepso.ca/publications

The Precarity Penalty: The impact of employment precarity on individuals, households and communities—and what to do about it: https://pepso.ca/research-projects

"Racialized Precarious Employment and the Inadequacies of the Canadian Welfare State"


www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/no-safe-harbour


The Lord blesses our work so that we may share its fruits with others.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29