

## PRECARIOUS WORK

It used to be that men will join a company and worked as part of that company until they were no longer capable of working. These people had a sense of pride and commitment towards their particular companies. Today companies are shirking their legal obligations to workers by replacing permanent jobs with contract and temporary work. This is known as "precarious work." Precarious workers therefore are those who fill permanent job needs but are denied permanent employee rights. These workers are subject to unstable employment, lower wages and subject to abuse and dangerous and unsafe working conditions. They are often denied the right to join a union, even when they have the right to unionize for fear of being replaced. Permanent employment in both private and public places has shifted to precarious jobs through outsourcing, use of employment agencies and inappropriate classification of workers as "short term", "independent contractors", "on-call", "flexible part-time."

Precarious employment is one of the greatest challenges facing workers in the Canadian labour market today. No matter how it's disguised, it's a new term that refers to jobs with high levels of uncertainty concerning benefits, compensation and future employment. People who do precarious work live with a certain amount of stress and mental trauma, the impact being unstable employment, less access to training, thus limiting the opportunities to get ahead because of fewer benefits, more trouble managing finances and more anxiety. The standard employment and traditional relationship based on full-time, secure work, where employees have access to good wages and benefits has ceased being the predominant employment structure, and in its place, part-time, temporary and casual forms of work have become increasingly common. Some of these people leave their previous country as professionals and are forced to do precarious work to maintain a family. A previous Globe and mail article stated that precarious employment is becoming more prevalent in Canada's largest city, and is putting financial strain and emotional stress in households.

Not too long ago college and university students, with their marketable skills after graduation, would find themselves in the workforce with considerable lucrative earning power and advanced themselves to their career aspirations. This is not the case today as today's graduates find themselves with enormous student loans that they cannot afford to repay because there are no good jobs for them. To repay these loans it may take them almost the same time to pay off a mortgage. This is the kind of society that's being created, which is fuelled by economic factors, technology, global competition and changes to the ways businesses and government are structured. If this trend of precarious work continues, it will not be too long when the effect will show its ugly face – there will be a majority (90%) in the workforce having low wages, no pension, no union, no benefits, and serious health and safety problems will occur, and no one will have a sense of pride.

Now the big question is what we must do to avoid this tsunami and put some oxygen back into people's lives. Unions cannot be silent and must continue to speak up for the vulnerable. Leaders have to speak up and ensure that the health and safety act as well as the employment standards act is adhered to and that good jobs do matter. Some process should be introduced to allow professionals from abroad who come to better their lives should have their licenses or designations recognized and regardless of the job, everyone should be able to enjoy simple benefits in the workplace.

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