

MP's REPORT: Canada's Employment Landscape: Shifting and Uncertain

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It doesn't matter

where I go or who I speak with - the message is clear and consistent ?

Canadians are concerned about the changing nature of employment. It is not only about the quantity of jobs but also about the quality.

Those who have full

time jobs ? and they do consider themselves the 'luckier' ones - have watched

as conditions within those jobs have drastically declined - whether that's longer working hours and more responsibility for the same pay, the reduction

of career training programs, the erosion or elimination of pensions and benefits,

or the constant fear of being laid off as their employer seeks to downsize or

trade full time employment positions for part time and contract ones.

For part time

workers the stresses are similar but often compounded by the lack of any

benefits and the need to have multiple part time jobs. They often get 0 hours

in a week or have conflicts between their part time jobs as their employers

want them to work during the same periods. Contract workers are the most at

risk in the modern employment landscape as many are not contract workers by

choice, often performing the same duties as those who are part time or full

time. They often have to provide their own equipment, and have no workplace

health and safety, sick days, or vacation time, and can be terminated without

notice, cause or compensation.

There is no commonly

accepted definition of precarious employment. Instead, it typically exhibits

symptoms such as low pay (sometimes below minimum pay), variable work hours,

uncertainty in current or future employment, no pension, no weekly minimum

hours of work, no benefits, no sick pay etc. The lack of a clear, objective

definition prevents the collection of concrete statistics to determine the

extent of precarious employment and to develop a framework to reduce workplace

insecurity.

In 2014, 30-32% of

Canadians were in precarious work, with single parents (51.7%), recent

immigrants (40.7%) and visible minorities (34.4%) amongst the highest

percentage in Ontario alone. The age groups impacted the most were youth (under

25 years old) who are trying to enter the workforce and seniors (over 65 years

old) who are unable to retire as they have no pension security to rely upon. In

2015, more than 26% of Ontario's workforce was categorized as non-standard

employment, including temporary employees, solo self-employed and involuntary

part-time workers. It is clear that our employment landscape has shifted

leaving Canadians with not only financial uncertainty, but also the inability

to plan for the future.

Employment instability

affects the financial, mental and physical health of individuals and their families ? and this has consequences on Canadian society. Precarious employment not only affects an individual's standard of living, but also increases the cost to the Canadian taxpayer ? by increasing the demands on our healthcare system, our Employment Insurance (EI) program, and delivering less income tax revenue to pay for the programs and services that ensure a prosperous economy and the well-being of all Canadians.

Last month, I hosted

a town hall to discuss this issue and explore several policy areas that might improve both the quality and the quantity of jobs for Canadians. Suggestions include:

Reward Companies

that have a high percentage of full time Employees. This could be done by offering a lower EI premium than that of companies who have a higher ratio of part time to full time.

Reward Companies

that have comprehensive benefit and pension packages for all their workers. This could be provided through incentives or an overall lower corporate tax rate.

Reward Companies

that provide career development and training programs. This could be provided through lower EI premiums or other incentives.

To reduce precarious

employment, it is critical we begin collecting relevant, robust data that will allow the federal government to create comprehensive tax reforms and policies. The federal government must define a legal and policy framework that fosters increased economic security, and positions Canadians to get ahead, and not just get by.

As always, do not hesitate to contact me at

Leona.Alleslev@parl.gc.ca or by phone at 905-773-8358 to let me know your priorities for building a better Canada in 2019.