

## Changing Workplaces Review, September 2015

### Submission from the Northumberland Moving Forward on Poverty Education and Awareness Committee

#### Introduction

It is noted in the letter from the Special Advisors for the Changing Workplaces Review that the impact of the changes in the workplace on employees and employers are complex. We are hopeful as a community that strengthening the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Standards Act will have positive outcomes for individuals and families in our communities, particularly those who are the most vulnerable. The Northumberland Moving Forward on Poverty Education and Awareness Committee held a session on September 11, 2015 utilizing the Guide to Consultations to provide an opportunity in our community to engage in discussion and provide input into the review. We focused on 3 particular questions as outlined below.

#### **Q1 “How has work changed for you”**

- All trends mentioned in the preamble of the review consultation guide were agreed upon as having a substantial impact on employment in our community:
  - The shift away from manufacturing towards employment in service industries
  - Technological impact
  - Globalization
  - Smaller, leaner workplaces
  - Decreases in private sector unions
  - Increased precarious, non-standard employment

Additionally, the discussion noted:

- Greater inequity in workplaces
- Rise in Temp Agencies
  - More formal approach with less direct access to employers
  - Increased competition
  - Increased complexity in application process which is especially difficult for older workers, individuals with intellectual or mental health difficulties
  - Brokered employment
  - Lack of benefits, security, guaranteed hours
  - Negative impact on wages, negative impact on the economy
  - Demoralizing process
  - Temporary employees doing the same job for less pay
  - Poor support for mental health or physical concerns
- 4 Generations in the Workplace: competition between youth and seniors for the same jobs
- Loss of “Knowledge Jobs” as well as manufacturing jobs to overseas companies
- Attrition in companies – when one position is eliminated it is often not replaced but rather shared among staff (“do more with less philosophy” is shifting to “do everything with nothing”)
- Instead of 8-12 different roles in your career it is changing to 8-12 careers

## Changing Workplaces Review, September 2015

### Submission from the Northumberland Moving Forward on Poverty Education and Awareness Committee

- Stagnant wages with increased workloads
- Greater burn out and mental health issues
- Growing number out of the workforce with little or no way back in due to lack of skills, lack of credentials. Those individuals who struggled to find work and stay employed are being now pushed farther and farther out of the workforce.

#### **Q2 *What type of workplace changes do we need to both improve economic security for workers, especially vulnerable workers and to succeed and prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?***

- Base standards are needed to fulfill expectations of work in Canada
  - Standards for sick time need to be established and equitable regardless of size of company/employer
  - Temp Agencies must follow the regulations expected of all employers
    - Equitable wages, sick days, and performance reviews / termination processes
    - Consider a framework resembling that of the European Union which ensures workers in precarious employment relationships (short term contracts and work obtained through temporary employment agencies) have the same rights and benefits as those in permanent relationships.
    - Develop standards to transition employees from temporary to permanent employment (ie. duration limits for temporary employees, limits of number of temporary employees per workplace)
- The Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation recommends making unemployment benefits more accessible for those in short-term contracts who exit and re-enter the workforce. New models of unemployment benefits must also be considered to address the income loss of those who are employed but at a reduced wage from their previous job.
- Address inequities for small businesses – provide incentives and support to these employers
- Education
  - For businesses/employers to utilize and educate their employees about:
    - the Labour Relations and Employment Standards Acts
    - the 9 essential skills (Reading, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Thinking, Digital Technology, Continuous Learning)

## **Changing Workplaces Review, September 2015**

### **Submission from the Northumberland Moving Forward on Poverty Education and Awareness Committee**

- Education (cont'd)
  - For high school, college and university
    - The 9 essential skills
    - Opportunities (such as Co-Op's) that provide education regarding the Labour Relations and Employee Standards Acts
    - Opportunities outside of the classroom to learn about workplaces, employer responsibilities and employee rights (and how to assert these rights)

#### **Q10 *Do current enforcement provisions of the Act work well?***

- Need for more effective, faster adjudication process
- Reinstate proactive workplace inspections
- Enforcement mechanisms are needed to ensure understanding of the seriousness of inequities enacted on the employee including penalties and fines for employers who have not paid their employees or owe their employees money or benefits or Records of Employment (through Canadian Revenue Agency or Ministry of Transportation)

#### **Additional Comments**

- Workers in Non-Standard employment in Australia receive a “casual loading” equivalent to approximately 20% of the minimum wage to compensate for the lack of certainty in their employment. This may assist in decreasing evictions, homelessness, and the need for those who are employed to use local food banks.
- It is imperative to state that minimum wages in Ontario are not adequate to meet the basic needs of individuals and families. A living wage, or basic income guarantee is necessary for individuals and families to be able to afford the very basics of life such as appropriate, safe housing and nutritious food.