

September 18th, 2015

C Michael Mitchell
The Honourable John Murray
Changing Workplaces Review, ELCPB,
400 University Ave., 12th Floor Toronto,
ON M7A 1T7



Submission by email

Dear C. Michael Mitchell and Honourable John Murray,

United Way of Peel Region (UWPR) is focused on poverty reduction in our community - poverty reduction, prevention and supporting those who are impacted by it. 17% of the general population lives in poverty in Peel Region¹, which is in part a result of the high unemployment rate of 8.9% in 2011². Current employment figures show there is 1 job for every 4 people in Peel, whereas the current provincial forecasts are based on the ratio of 2:1³. Rates of unemployment are even higher for youth, newcomers, visible minorities, single parents, and people with disabilities and mental health concerns who face barriers and stigma in accessing employment.

The Peel youth population (15-24) has increased 14.6% since 2006⁴. Therefore, Peel has 29.2% more people entering the workforce (aged 15-24) then leaving (55-64) – which is almost double that of the GTA (15.8%)⁵. In addition, 14.8% of Peels population reports having a disability⁶, and 16.5% of families in Peel are single parent households (with 81.7% of those being female led)⁷.

Further to this, Peel Region’s population has tripled in 40-years to its current population of 1.3 million residents⁸. This population growth is primarily due to immigration. Over 50% of Peel’s population is comprised of immigrants⁹, making it one of the most culturally diverse communities in Canada.

With a significant shift in the labour market, it is not surprising that 40% of workers in the GTHA are precariously employed¹⁰. However precarity is now found in sectors, in occupations, and in socio-economic groups that were previously immune to this form of employment. Men and women are

¹ 2011 tax filer data

² Peel Data Centre. 2011 Census Data

³ Business Intelligence Center of Excellence. “Labour Market Trends and Emerging Issues.” July 2015.

⁴ Peel Data Centre. “2011 Census Bulletin: Age and Sex.” 2011

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Portraits of Peel. “A Community Left Behind.” 2011 – based on 2006 data

⁷ Peel Data Centre. “2011 Census Bulletin: Marriage and Families” 2011

⁸ Peel Data Centre. “Quick Facts.” 2011

⁹ *Ibid.*

equally likely to be in precarious employment¹¹. New immigrants and youth are mainly in precarious employment¹². People in precarious employment earn less and face more uncertainty. This has a negative impact not only on peoples' lives but also the economy as a whole.

In response to this growth and this level of vulnerability, United Way, in partnership with key stakeholders, has been working on strategies to increase access to services that support vulnerable, marginalized populations in Peel. United Way of Peel Region has advocated for affordable and accessible child care for single parents who are precariously employed, as well as for gainful employment opportunities for newcomers, youth (particular visible minorities), and people with disabilities and mental health concerns. We do this through funding after school programs, launching a mental health awareness module for employers, and by contributing to the FACES report on the experience of black youth in Peel to make recommendations to address poverty in the black community.

Recommendations

UWPR's recommendations are aligned with many key community partners, including making contributions to the "Precarity Penalty" report published by Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO). While United Way of Peel Region is very supportive of the recommendations outlined in that report, this submission will focus on a few key recommendations to eliminate precarious employment and reduce poverty. In order to accomplish this, this submission will focus on three questions outlined in the Labour Consultation Guide:

- **Question 2:** 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 21st century?
- **Question 8:** In the context of the changing nature of employment, what do you think about who is and who isn't covered by the ESA? What specific changes would you like to see? Are there changes to definitions of employees and employers or to existing exclusions and exemptions that should be considered? Are there new exemptions that should be considered?
- **Question 11:** In the Context of the changing nature of employment, what do you think about who is and is not covered by the LRA? What specific changes would you like to see?

Question 2: What type of workplace changes do we need to both improve economic security for workers, especially vulnerable workers and to successes and prosper in the 21st century?

The workplace has changed, and through these changing economic conditions many people have lost good paying, full time jobs and had to replace them with contract or several part time positions that

¹⁰ Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO). "The Precarity Penalty." 2012

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

offer no benefits, no retirement savings and no commitment to the employee. This impacts an individual's economic security and prosperity. In order to support these workplace changes, we need overarching community supports with financial investment from all three levels of government. Therefore United Way of Peel Region is recommending:

- Regulations to ensure that contract positions cannot be renewed for more than two years without being turned into a full-time permanent position.
- A child care strategy to enhance access to affordable, regulated, flexible child care; child care that reflects the changing nature of work hours and schedules and enables access for precariously employed parents.
- All levels of government consider how precarious employment creates barriers to community supports and program access- and invest in resources and programs tailored to support those in precarious employment (as these individuals are more likely to be in need, as many people who are precariously employed live in poverty).

As stated above 40% of workers in the labour market in the Greater Toronto Area are precariously employed. While Precarity is now seen in groups previously immune to this type of employment there are still groups who are overrepresented in precarious employment- including youth, visible minorities and newcomers. Therefore the remainder of this submission will focus on recommendations specific to these groups.

In Peel Region, the youth unemployment rate is 18.9%¹³. A Peel-Halton 2011-2014 survey revealed some employers are hesitant to hire youth and cited that they believe youth have: a sense of entitlement, poor attitudes toward work, lack of soft skills, and a lack of 'hands on' experience¹⁴.

With a lack of employment opportunities for youth (both because of mature workers staying in the workforce longer as well as the reasons listed above) many young people are willing to accept precarious employment and low pay because they feel they have no other opportunities.

Visible minorities also face a higher rate of precarious employment than the general population. According to the Peel FACES report, many black individuals in Peel feel unwanted, isolated and socially devalued. In addition, black youth reported feeling isolated and marginalized by the public education system¹⁵, and the unemployment rate for black youth in the GTHA is 30%¹⁶. Unfortunately this kind of systemic discrimination, coupled with lack of targeted hiring approaches leaves many visible minorities in precarious employment. UWPR is recommending:

¹³ Business Intelligence Center of Excellence. "Labour Market Trends and Emerging Issues." July 2015.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ F.A.C.E.S Facilitating Access Change Equity in Systems. "Research on the Black Population and Youth in Peel." 2015

¹⁶ Civic Action. "Creating New Paths to Employment for Youth". 2014.

- Investment in programs for youth to gain experience, in particular, targeting vulnerable, at risk, racialized and marginalized youth (ex: mentoring programs)
- Employers are educated about how job postings are presented, and how to reach out to broader marginalized communities within the hiring process.
- All sectors assess how they can contribute to efforts to build awareness of discrimination within the labour market- not only in hiring and interviewing, but also in retaining and advancing qualified workers who are racialized, women and/or immigrants

Further to this, many highly skilled or newly graduated newcomers are pushed to seek Canadian work experience, despite it being illegal to ask for. This drives many newcomers into questionable work arrangements with a high risk of exploitation. The unspoken requirement of Canadian work experience continues to drive many workers into such work conditions.

The issue of temporary employment agencies also should be addressed- as temporary and precarious work conditions are offered for much longer than temporary period of time, making it impossible to secure stable and secure work. Precarious working conditions have adverse effects on newcomers and their families, including a deterioration of mental and physical health. Unpredictable hours and lack of minimum guaranteed hours of work per week creates employment and income insecurity. The option of permanent and stable employment should be made available so that newcomers do not stay trapped in the cycle of Precarity. It is important to see the worker as not just an individual, but an important player in a web of multiple players such as family and community members. With this in mind, UWPR is recommending that:

- Federal and provincial governments and employers must continue to improve credential recognition for newcomers and immigrants.
- More oversight, transparency and accountability for employers and temp agencies alike to ensure workers are being compensated fairly and are able to achieve an adequate standard of living.

Question 8: In the context of the changing nature of employment, what do you think about who is and who isn't covered by the ESA? What specific changes would you like to see? Are there changes to definitions of employees and employers or to existing exclusions and exemptions that should be considered? Are there new exemptions that should be considered?

United Way of Peel Region would like to see the Employment Standards Act expanded to include more workers, specifically those who are precariously employed (part-time, contract, multiple job holders) and be more representative of the current nature of employment. The minimal employment standards outlined in labour related legislation needs to ensure dignity and respect for all workers, and provide the framework for “good jobs” and better working conditions. UWPR therefore recommends the Employment Standards Act is updated to include:

- All workers are classified as employees unless the employer provides proof to the contrary
- All work by temp agencies/ contract positions are paid at the same rate and benefits as permanent work
- Individuals employed by temporary employment agencies or in contract positions have equal access to benefits and supports (ex: Employment Insurance).

Question 11: In the Context of the changing nature of employment, what do you think about who is and is not covered by the LRA? What specific changes would you like to see?

Further to UWPR's recommendation on the Employment Standards Act, the Labour Relations Act should also be expanded to include all workers and to ensure better quality employment and dignity of workers, including those who are precariously employed. UWPR therefore recommends:

- Strengthen the rules to ensure workers can get a fair first contract
- Require employers to provide advance notice of scheduling to ensure employees have sufficient time to make arrangements for child care, doctors appointments etc.

Conclusion

Systemic discrimination and access to the labour market is a huge concern for newcomers, visible minorities and youth alike. This inequality is amplified by the changes in the labour market that created a higher rate of precarious employment (which disproportionately affects disadvantaged and vulnerable groups). Steps need to be taken to ensure all Ontarians have equal access to the labour market, and to the decent, full-time permanent positions for which they are qualified. Ontario (specifically Peel) also needs access to community supports to assist individuals and their families while they are precariously employed (such as flexible, affordable, quality child care). United Way of Peel Region believes the recommendations above will support the Ministry of Labour in accomplishing this goal.

In addition, a proactive enforcement of both the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Standards Act are needed to enhance transparency and accountability in the system to provide workers with better working conditions. Public education also needs to take place in culturally and linguistically diverse ways to enhance workers' knowledge of their rights as outlined in both Acts. Public education also needs to be done to inform employers about the skills young people and diverse communities hold and can bring to a workplace. Without this public outreach campaign, workers will remain timid and hesitant to know or demand their rights and employers will not feel compelled to hire vulnerable populations. With more regulations and enforcement around precarious employment, individuals will be moved out of poverty and be able to contribute to the economy in a more meaningful way. This will

result in reduced costs to our Province in the areas of health care, community supports and incarceration.

United Way of Peel Region thanks the Ministry of Labour for the opportunity to respond to the Changing Workplaces Review. We look forward to seeing the results of the consultation and hope we can work together in future to address the most pressing needs in our community.

Sincerely,



Shelley White
President & CEO



Anita Stellinga
VP, Community Investment