



Debbie Montgomery
President

Paul McKee
Vice President

Cathy Jarvis
Financial Secretary

Speaking notes for a Presentation by Debbie Montgomery, President,
Unifor Local 4268

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Good morning. My name is Debbie Montgomery. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this Changing Workplace Review. I represent approximately two thousand workers in the province of Ontario – a good many of which are workers in non-standard employment. These are defined as workers who do not have permanent full-time employment (standard work).

I myself, have been a worker in non-standard employment, working for many years as a young mother in part time employment. After assessing the cost of daycare and the impact of standard work on my young family I looked for and obtained what I thought was part time flexible employment.

The industry that I work in is one that many parents in Ontario rely on daily. I and thousands other workers drive student transportation buses. We drive children/our future to school for many times less than minimum wage. These part time employers definitely have the expectation of a full time commitment for part time work. I also discovered the expectation in this particular industry of working for free.....being paid for three to four hours per day but performing many duties outside of this window for free!

That said, despite mergers and acquisitions, and thankfully being part of a unionized environment for many years, initially, I had regular non-standard employment in this particular industry.

The school bus industry and as many part time precarious jobs, has a revolving door of vulnerable workers as it is low paying and does little to encourage investment by the worker in their job. It claims to provide free training that the workers must participate in without pay! I was told by one employer that they get their investment in this free training within a couple of months of hiring, yet they have these vulnerable workers sign a contract saying that once they have completed this training they must stay employed for a period of six months or they have to pay for the training! Nor are the employers of these precarious workers particularly interested in retaining permanent skilled part time workers as even the minimal costs associated such as seniority based vacation pay subtracts from their bottom line.

Through my union and my working experience I became aware that I was employed in part time vulnerable and precarious work. Myself and co-workers, many of them women and single parents, could not reach enough hours worked to attain benefits that the employer offered, sometimes often finding that if we were so much as a minute off the hours required there was no flexibility in this regard.

This work was and remains precarious as it is low paying, despite being skilled employment, is physically and mentally demanding, is comprised of split shifts, making other employment difficult to fit in and also is comprised of obscure hours and weekend work. Vulnerable workers are often treated and made to feel as though they are an essential service. Time off for illness, family commitments, vacation, is very much discouraged and under the constant threat of termination as often there is not another worker who can cover the work. This contributes

to high stress levels, illness, and lack of the ability to participate in community life in Ontario.

Over the years and as the costs associated with caring and raising a young family rose, I found there to be less flexibility within my part time work and little to no room for reasonable advancement. This left me to augment my wages with two part time jobs in order to provide for my family.

In recent years, the practice of contract flipping, has very much so destabilized the school bus environment as it has others. Part time precarious and vulnerable workers, do not have any job security as they are bounced around from Company to Company and as this occurs may be rehired for the same work they have consistently performed for significantly lesser pay. They are affected, not just income wise, but with compromised Health and Safety working conditions, loss of seniority, less vacation time and lower vacation percentages. When contract flipping occurs in a unionized environment, collective bargaining agreements and rights are lost and must be constantly rebuilt from scratch, thus undercutting union's abilities to negotiate better conditions for the workers they represent. This has a significant demoralizing effect on this growing number of workers in these environments that can only be reflected in our society in a very negative manner. I have personally witnessed the unsettling effects of this - people losing their homes, waiting lists increase for subsidized housing, use of food banks go up, less time spent as families with family, slum neighbourhoods, no access to quality health care, the list goes on and on. These workers are put at a constant disadvantage leaving them with no vision of a better life and entrenches poverty conditions.

Precarious and vulnerable workers tend to be fearful of reprisal if they speak up in their workplace and tend to be less engaged because they feel they have no buy in. There is little to inspire an attachment or pride

in the work performed in what has been described as a race to the bottom.

A revised and updated ESA and Labour Relations act needs to protect workers who find themselves in these employment conditions. The differences between non-standard precarious employment and standard employment needs to be lessened. In the course of a contract flip, workers performing the same work should be given the first opportunity of employment and not have to work for lower wages and standards! Successor rights should be expanded to include these situations. Continuity of employment on an industry basis needs to be reviewed and standards for such put in place.

Enforcement of the ESA is sadly lacking. Penalties for agencies and employers that do not follow the procedures as described in the ESA seem to be of little deterrent to employers. Formal records of complaints need to be kept of non-compliant and repeat offender employers for future proceedings and stiffer penalties enforced. I am baffled when union members contact an inspector for basic workplace violations and are told to go to their union. Unions are often putting untold resources and arbitrating for basic ESA rights and standards such as being paid for time spent on the job!

There needs to be easier access for workers to be informed and aware of their rights. The complaint process needs to be more worker accessible and understandable. Workers must be informed of their legislated rights upon employment by the employer.

This review comes at crucial time as the workforce has changed rapidly and in some cases drastically in the last couple of decades due to the increase of nonstandard and precarious work. The effects on workers and society and generations of workers to come must be addressed.

Thank you for allowing myself and Unifor Local 4268 the opportunity to voice our concerns of our members on these important issues at this time.