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Speaking notes for a Presentation by Paul McKee, Vice President, Unifor  
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Goodmorning. My name is Paul McKee. 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. I myself, have been a worker in non-standard employment, working for temporary agencies for many years. What I have personally seen and experienced is workers being marginalized and treated as lower class employees. I often heard people being told, “if you don’t like it go home”.

Workers from temp agencies have limited training, less opportunities for advancement because Companies who use these services do not have a vested interest in these workers. If “work is one of the most fundamental aspects in a person’s life”, temp services circumvent this by not allowing a sense of identity, self-worth and emotional well-being. By not having permanent full-time employment (standard work), from which to base credit ratings, acquire mortgages and financing for other needs, these workers are put at a disadvantage leaving them with no vision of a better life and entrenches poverty conditions.

Precarious work is most often low paying, physically demanding jobs and/or obscure hours, ie split shifts, weekend and shift work.

Employers of temporary agency workers do not have to provide the same accomodation as they would for directly hired employees in the case of workplace injuries or disabilities. This leads to loopholes allowing employers to discriminate based on prohibited grounds. The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act recognizes temp agencies as the sole employer of their workers, therefore allowing Companies to keep a clean WSIB record if temp agency workers are injured on the job. This clean hands policy leads to a deteriorating environment for health and safety, wages, and working conditions.

Health and Safety Regulations are not followed as the workers tend to be more transient. There is seldom a formal structure in the workplace. Workers are fearful of reprisal if they speak up and tend to be less engaged because they feel they have no buy in. Work is just as described, temporary in nature. Temporary workers generally have no attachment to the job. There is little to inspire an attachment or pride in the work performed because the employer does not take ownership of the employee.

Employers of temp agency workers often attempt to thwart unionization by claiming they have no employees. The workplace that I now work out of, while employing over ninety workers from a temporary agency, claimed seventeen times to the Ontario Labour Relations Board and the provincial judicial system, that they had no employees. These ninety workers of which I was one, didn't have standard employment until we became unionized. I believe the use of non-standard employment can be attributed to a lack of standard employment.

A revised and updated ESA needs to obligate employers to hire temporary workers after a defined period of time. There should be a defined ratio of temporary workers allowed in any place of employment with standard work being of the majority. There should be wage parity for those performing the same work or in equivalent positions after a defined period of time on the job.

Enforcement of the ESA is sadly lacking. Penalties for agencies and employers that do not follow the procedures as described in the ESA are of no deterrent to these employers. There needs to be easier access for temporary workers to be informed and aware of their rights. Some other changes that need to be addressed are severance for all employees ie Seasonal and casual. There also should be an easier calculation of Holiday Pay

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.

