

What is Precarious Work? Risks and remedies associated with precarious work.

Oddly enough when I first read that I thought oh what does that mean? That term precarious work? Are they talking about peculiar and odd work? That seems very strange. Then I thought about it more and I realized that may be in many respects the definition of my future and the world of work I live in and it perhaps is not that strange at all.

I found myself thinking yes that is it! Precarious work is weird and wacky work schedules that many of us young workers have to look forward to or in many cases faced with right now, it's the mirage of jobs that we see out there that are of short term contract nature, the jobs with no stability, no benefits, no vacations, no holidays, no sick time and with no structured pay grid. It may be my future, and it may be yours right now.

The mere thought of what awaits me after I graduate in terms of the types of employment out there is my biggest fear as a student and probably my parents. All I keep hearing is "Son, the types of jobs that are out there today are different than when we were in your shoes." When my parents graduated from school they were afforded opportunities when they graduated that are no longer prevalent or common place in today's world. I know it is a different world today but cost of living is higher than ever before and the jobs just have not kept up with these standards. Sure there are opportunities for those who work hard but so many of the jobs are part time, contract and like the term says of a precarious nature. As a young person, the risks of precarious work as I see it, is that it forces us to not think too far into the future because the nature of this type of employment will not afford us the ability to do so. All you have to do is look on the local job search websites and listen to the many employer speeches to confirm these facts. Most of the positions today are all short term, part time and contract in nature. Most of the jobs do not offer any stability, no benefits, and certainly you should not expect to get any holidays. I can tell you as a young and upcoming professional thinking and planning too far ahead is not something I can think about doing. What is investing? Will I ever be able to do that? Buy a house, really? I told my Mother the other day I seriously doubted I would marry or have children if my employment did not accommodate the ability to do so. Why would I add that stress to my life or theirs if I could not have the chance to have employment stability? I think her heart sank.

Temporary jobs, part time, contract jobs are the norm but this is weird and wacky and precarious work and how can anyone sustain themselves long term like this. How can we plan for a future like our parents did? How do we get the rest we need to refresh ourselves by having a paid vacation period? How do we save to buy that house, get married, have a family and map out a plan? How can we have a family without proper benefits to take care of their health and dental needs not to mention our own?

Unions are what provide workers the opportunity to gain strength in numbers so they can have a voice at work, about what they care about. Workers are involved in the process of negotiating their employment contracts with their employers. These contracts speak to wages, vacations, benefits, pay equity, sick leave, scheduling of hours, health and safety in the workplace, human rights, professional development and career advancement. Unions provide fairness to all workers and create better standards and a strong middle class across the communities they serve. Union members earn better

wages and benefits and they have strong retirement pension plans with solid health insurance benefit packages. Is it wrong that I want that? Is it wrong that I want to be a part of that world?

So many questions, so many fears with really one answer that comes to my mind as a young career minded student who comes from a hard working home is to have more jobs that are unionized. That is the answer. My Mother who is a strong union supporter tells me that we need to work to turn more of the part time-contract jobs into unionized jobs so they are at the very least afforded the benefits of the full time worker. We need to encourage them to sign up and become a part of a union when there is an opportunity for them to do so like the current Part time Campaign that is happening with OPSEU and the 24 Ontario Colleges. This sounds to me like a step in the right direction and the beginning of what could be a remedy to help assist me and other young workers. It could give me and you hope for the future for a more promising career that is not full of precarious work scenarios. Don't we all deserve that? I know I do!

Thank you for taking the time to read my essay on what is precarious work and the risk and remedies associated with it. I hope you will consider me a candidate for the Scholarship Award.

Sincerely,

Justin French.
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PSI Program