

## Employment Justice | PRECARIOUS WORK

**The social teaching of the Church and admonition of every pope since Pope Leo XIII have emphasized the moral imperative to pay all workers a living wage. When this happens, the lives of workers and their families improves as well as the local, regional and national economy.**

The aim of raising the **minimum wage** and amending the Employment Standards Act (BILL 148) is to improve the lives of workers, especially low income and those involved in ‘precarious’ working conditions.<sup>18</sup>

**The general minimum wage was set at \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018, and is scheduled to increase to \$15 per hour on January 1, 2019. Prior to this year, the minimum wage rate increased from \$11.40/hour to \$11.60/hour in October 2017. In 2003, the minimum wage was set at \$8.75 per hour, and in March 2009 to \$9.50. In March 2010, it was \$10.25 per hour. In 1995, the minimum wage was frozen at \$6.85, where it stayed for the next eight years.**

Many workers today are engaged in what is called ‘precarious work’ or ‘precarious employment’. It is characterized by a lack of continuity, low wages, lack of benefits and possibly greater risk of injury and ill health. How precarious a job may be gauged by the job’s level of earnings, level of employer-provided benefits, degree of regulatory protection and degree of control or influence within the labour process. The primary types of precarious work are self-employment, part-time (steady and intermittent) and temporary employment.”<sup>19</sup>

Clearly precarious employment<sup>20</sup> or precarious work can negatively affect a family’s quality of life and increases stress about financial decisions. It comes as no surprise that poverty rates of workers in non-standard employment are two to three times higher than the poverty rates of workers in standard employment.

**“The way in which we treat our most vulnerable neighbours...speaks volumes about the very nature of our society. Ethically and morally, a society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable and marginalized members.... we have a long way to go before we can claim with any honesty that we are applying moral treatment in dealing with the least fortunate among us.”** Persistent Poverty: Voices from the Margins, ISARC – 2010

Regarding migrant temp workers and their access to services for undocumented workers, the province should work to ensure that regardless of immigration status, these very vulnerable people have access to provincial services without fear of being asked for proof of status. It should work closely with municipalities that have already put similar policies into place.

Candidates should be aware that current labour force trends and indicators suggest that precarious work is increasing as people, especially those with only a high school education, juggle several jobs, seeking ever more temporary, part-time and casual work and are often not paid for work completed.

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18 To assist faith-based, non-for-profit organizations that receive provincial funding in handling the increased minimum wage, the government should provide an increase in transfer payments to allow them time to comply fully with new legislation without undermining the quality and affordability of their services. 19 Law Commission of Ontario | Commission du droit de l'Ontario, A. The Rise of Precarious Work, II. Identifying Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work, Vulnerable Workers Interim Report. August 2012. 20 Most working-age low-income people are engaged in non-standard employment with low and fluctuating incomes. They are among the estimated 30% of workers in Ontario in 'precarious work'. From 1997 to 2015, non-standard employment grew at an average annual rate of 2.3% per year, nearly twice as fast as standard employment (1.2%). Today, there is a wide range of people experiencing precarious work, from new graduates involuntarily working part-time to individuals working multiple jobs to make ends meet.