

Provincial
Election

Vote
June 12!

K-W RESIDENTS VOTE



**Poverty Free
Kitchener-Waterloo**

Poverty Elimination Framework

Fair Employment Policies and Practices

Working more for less

Many workers in Ontario are finding it difficult to find good jobs that provide a decent income. Anyone working full time, full year at \$11/hr is earning 16% below Ontario's poverty level, the Low Income Measure. Jobs have increasingly become precarious, i.e. more insecure, part-time and temporary, offering low wages and little to no benefits. The lack of stable

and decent waged employment results in many workers and their families having to live in poverty, struggling to make ends meet. They may increase personal debt to pay bills, live in substandard housing and need to rely on assistance such as food banks. This contributes to poor health and increased stress which may further poverty or under-employment.

Low-wage jobs on the rise

The number of workers in minimum wage jobs has more than doubled between 2003 and 2011, representing nearly 10% of Ontario's workforce. Minimum wage jobs are no longer being performed solely by young workers in small businesses. Increasingly, it is women, workers over 25 years of age, workers of colour and new immigrants who are making up a greater share of the minimum wage workforce. Further, nearly half of all minimum wage workers in Ontario are employed in large businesses that employ 500 or more employees. These are usually large corporations that make millions of dollars in profits by paying their workers poverty-level wages.

Paying good wages makes good economic sense. Lower income earners are most likely to spend the money they earn on goods and services in the local community. This stimulates production and demand. It has been estimated that increasing the minimum wage to \$14 an hour would inject an extra \$5 billion into the economy and workers' pockets. A decent minimum wage also promotes healthy communities, as workers and their families would have greater access to healthy food, medicine, healthcare services and recreational activities.

Job prospects affected by barriers and inequities

Many people may want to work but find barriers to getting a job – persons with disabilities, immigrants, younger or older workers. For example, discrimination creates employment inequalities for people of colour who continue to be paid less – \$30,385 on average compared to \$37,332 for non-racialized groups, and have higher rates of unemployment – 8.6% compared to 6.2% for non-racialized groups as of 2005.

Ontario needs to update and enforce Employment Standards

Ontario's outdated employment standards legislation and lack of proper enforcement are resulting in many employers taking advantage of workers. Migrant workers and temporary workers often face sub-standard employment conditions. Many workers are not paid full wages or are charged fees to get a job.

Resources: Migrant Workers Alliance for Change: www.migrantworkersalliance.org ; Good Jobs For All Coalition: www.goodjobsforall.ca ; Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: www.policyalternatives.ca ; Law Commission of Ontario: www.lco-cdo.org ; Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario project (PEPSO): www.pepsoc.ca



**Social Planning Council
of Kitchener-Waterloo
Community Information Centre
of Waterloo Region**

How, where, when and why to vote:
www.waterlooregion.org/provincial-election-2014

This fact sheet was adapted from a series produced by Social Planning Toronto.

FAIR EMPLOYMENT POLICIES & PRACTICES

Where Ontario political parties stand

The platforms of all four main political parties promise measures to create jobs but do not say what will make those jobs decent, well paid, secure and with necessary benefits. Creating decent jobs by improving and enforcing the labour standards is not in any of the party platforms.

Party	Job Creation	Wages	Labour Standards	Reducing Barriers
Green	Create jobs for youth with the Social Innovation Foundation; lower payroll taxes (health tax)	Increase the minimum wage in the short term – in the long term institute a Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) – 2014 budget to include a public commission to determine how to implement GAI in Ontario		
Liberal	Extend the Youth Jobs Strategy; Increase apprenticeship opportunities and training; Introduce Experience Ontario- youth paid community work experience Infrastructure investment; lower business and corporate taxes	Index minimum wage to inflation - \$11/hr as of June 1, 2014		Create more employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
New Democratic	Lower business and corporate taxes			Invest in safe and affordable childcare spaces Invest in re-training programs for workers over the age of 55
Progressive Conservative	Create jobs and growth in northern and rural areas Eliminate 100,000 public sector jobs, Lower business and corporate taxes; Open public service contracts to competition; remove barriers to trades and apprenticeships; reduce small business rules and regulation by 1/3		Greater transparency in union spending and give workers choice re: use of union dues; End government monopoly on providing workplace insurance	Match job-ready newcomers with jobs; accelerated pathway to citizenship for post-secondary grads and those who have worked at least 1 year in Canada Connect employers to people with disabilities; reduce barriers in workplace and to post-secondary education for those with disabilities

Get Involved... Ask your candidates:

Will you and your party:

- Ensure those working full time, full year are not living in poverty?
- Create good, decent paying full-time jobs for all skill levels?
- Update, monitor and enforce labour standards?
- Regulate temporary employment agencies?
- Improve employment prospects for immigrants and reduce their poverty rate?
- Reduce barriers in the work place for people with disabilities and provide appropriate supports to those who are not able to compete in the modern employment market?
- Continue Employment Benefits and provide transition support to social assistance recipients without cutting existing income supports?



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