

The LCO's Project on Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work

Background:

The nature of employment is evolving. The standard employment relationship characterized by full-time, secure employment, where the worker has access to good wages and benefits, is no longer the norm. Increasingly, more precarious forms of work have arisen. This type of work is defined by low wages with few or no benefits, little job security and minimal control over work conditions. These workers are disproportionately women, racialized persons, immigrants, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, older adults and youth.

These changes in the nature of work and the characteristics of the emerging class of vulnerable workers engaged in precarious work led to the Law Commission of Ontario's (LCO)'s project on Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work.

Purpose of the Project:

The objective of this project is to make recommendations designed to respond to the challenges faced by vulnerable workers in order to either reduce their vulnerability to, or the impacts of, precarious work. The Project focuses, in particular, on improvements to the statutory and policy framework of the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* in protecting these workers. However, it also reviews and makes recommendations about existing community and government supports and programs for workers', employers and for training and education, as well as the role of labour organizations.

What We Have Done So Far:

- The LCO has formed an Advisory Group made up of academics, advocates, legal and government representatives, as well as representatives of worker, employer and community organizations.
- The LCO commissioned two research papers from experts in the field in relation to the extent of precarious work in Ontario and *Employment Standards Act* enforcement and precarious jobs, as well as carrying out considerable internal research.
- Over the course of the Project to date, the LCO has engaged in approximately 50 consultations with individuals and organizations, including more than 100 workers.
- In early 2011, the LCO released Background and Consultation papers, and received and reviewed submissions from a range of individuals and organizations.

Next Steps:

The LCO will gather feedback on the *Interim Report* until October 1, 2012. Based on the feedback and the LCO's continuing research, the LCO anticipates releasing a *Final Report* in Winter 2013.