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Temps Up In Arms Over Working Conditions

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CityNews.ca Staff

Doing temporary work can be really rewarding, as you can explore different types of jobs, often with a reduced expectation of commitment. The jobs are also helpful to fill in gaps between lengthier employment.

The frequency of both temporary and contract positions in the workforce is increasing. Recent statistics indicate that as many as one in ten Canadians are working in less-than-permanent situations. The reasons for this shift away from steady positions are unclear, but it seems employers enjoy the flexibility to modify their workforce as the need arises.

Unfortunately, temp workers can sometimes be taken for granted, and they don't generally enjoy the same wages and benefits as their full-time counterparts. In fact, according to the Canadian website Settlement.org, this part of the labour force earns 40 per cent less than the average full-time employee.

One worker, identified only as Ben, says he's had to suffer through the negative elements of being a temp for years.

"I don't have medication coverage. I don't have dental coverage. I don't have vision coverage. I don't get any of that. I get nothing. Just only the bare salary," he said.

There are approximately 700,000 temporary workers across Ontario, and with the economy floundering, that number is predicted to go up.

"We're going down a path where wages are getting lower and lower; people are not getting hired directly by companies," warns Deena Ladd of the Workers Action Centre.

The province is now looking into working conditions for temps.

"There is some evidence of agreements between an agency and an employer not to hire a worker full time without some kind of a penalty," noted Ontario Labour Minister Brad Duguid. "We're looking at it very closely."

It's important to know your legal rights as a temp employee so you can set your own boundaries. As an Ontario worker, you have the same rights, as outlined in the [Employment Standards Act](#), as any other worker in terms of hours of work, wages, statutory holidays, and other allowances.

Here are a few fun facts about being a temp, courtesy Settlement.org:

- Your work can let you go with no notice if you've worked less than three months. When you leave you should collect a record of employment, vacation pay (4 per cent of gross earnings), and any unpaid wages.
- After three months, just like any worker, you must either be given notice of the date you're done or termination pay.
- Some workers are not covered by the ESA, for example farmers, domestic workers, and some people who work in 24-hour operations. You can check your situation on the [Ministry of Labour](#) website.
- Your agency may tell you that you have to work three months before you can receive Public Holiday pay. This is incorrect. As long as you work your regular shift before and after the holiday, you are entitled to the extra pay. The only way you're not entitled is if you are classified as an "elect to work" employee.
- It is the legal responsibility of the temp agency to keep track of the time you work and pay you for all of it. However, if you have a problem, it's always a good idea to have your own records.

You can find out more about Elect-to-Work positions, and what the deal is with unions and temp workers by [clicking here](#).

After **Richard Madan's** story ran on Wednesday, ACSESS (Associate of Canadian Search, Employment and Staffing Services) issued a statement.

The full text follows:

Prospective employees and employers are strongly encouraged to choose ACSESS member companies to ensure that their rights are protected.

The Association of Canadian Search, Employment & Staffing Services (ACSESS), plays a pivotal role in promoting professional ethics and standards in the staffing industry, and actively works with government at the national and provincial levels to provide input on employment legislation and regulations.

All ACSESS member firms are committed to upholding a code of ethics and standards that was designed to protect the interest of candidates, temporary workers and client organizations, which calls for strict adherence to all applicable human rights, employment laws and regulations.

Virtually all temporary job agencies offer health and retirement benefits, but since most temporary employees stay with the staffing companies for less than 3 months, they often prefer to maximize their income and choose not to participate in the benefit plans offered to them. In about 50% of the cases, temporary employees decline coverage because they are covered by a spouse or parent.

Our members firms providing temporary staffing services are proud of their status as employers, and they adhere to all applicable employment legislation.

Temporary employment has additional longer-term benefits. In a recent survey of 2,300 past (in the last 12 months) temporary employees:

- 54% were now working full time
- More than 35% said working as a temporary employee contributed to their ability to find a full time position and 19% turned their temporary employment into full time positions
- 83% would recommend temporary work to a friend to gain the experience necessary to help obtain a permanent position

