

Working Families Manitoba

a community campaign of the Manitoba Federation of Labour

Work/Life Balance - Why Fair Labour Laws Matter to Working Families

There are just so many pressures on working families today: raising children, caring for aging parents, holding down a job, managing the family budget, carving out some personal time. Balancing work and home life is a never-ending challenge.

Working families deserve a provincial government that supports them with labour laws and policies that help balance work and family life. Finding that balance is much easier with:

- reasonable rights to family leave, parental leave, and sick leave when the pressure on families is greatest;
- the right to be treated fairly when asked to work overtime;
- adequate public holidays and vacation time;
- the right to at least one day off each week;
- a fair minimum wage; and
- workplace safety rules that ensure loved ones make it home healthy and in one piece;

These examples show how labour laws don't just help us at work; they can help us find a better balance between work and home life.

The Working Families Manitoba campaign wants all political parties to support labour laws and policies that help families find a better work/life balance. That's why we have produced this Work/Life Balance Issue Report to highlight the issues that help keep family life in balance.

We hope all Manitobans will keep these issues in mind when they vote this fall.

We can't take Fair Labour Laws for granted

Although the Employment Standards Code sounds boring, it lays out the rules that protect us from having work take over our home lives. It gives you rights when a family member falls ill or when you need to attend an appointment at your child's school. It establishes minimum standards for time off from work. It gives you the right to be paid extra for working overtime or on public holidays.

In Manitoba, business lobbyists and even some politicians are pushing to weaken the Employment Standards Code and other labour laws:



- The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce want a giant loophole that would let employers set “flexible” working conditions that don't even meet the minimum standards for time off, overtime, family leave, etc.
- The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce are lobbying for a discriminatory, two-tier minimum wage that would pay a lower rate to servers. The CFIB also wants that lower rate to apply to younger workers, as well as a general freeze on the minimum wage.
- The CFIB wants to make it more difficult for workers to exercise their right to join a union if they want to.

These changes that business lobbyists want would be a step backwards for working families, making it even harder to balance work and home life.

We need a provincial government that will stand up to the powerful interests who want to turn the clock backwards on labour law in Manitoba.

Fair Labour Laws that support Working Families

We encourage Manitobans to ask the political parties if they will commit to protect the labour law improvements that have been made to help Manitoba families over the past decade:



The Working Families Manitoba campaign also calls on all parties to support further improvements to Manitoba labour laws:

- In 2006, the provincial government added 3 new Family Leave days (time off to deal with family responsibilities) and 3 new Bereavement Leave days (time off to deal with a death in the family) under the Employment Standards Code.
 - In 2000, the federal and provincial governments expanded maternity and parental leave to allow for 50 weeks of paid EI benefits.
 - In 2004, the federal and provincial governments expanded compassionate care leave to allow for up to 8 weeks paid EI benefits.
 - In 2006, the province protected the safety of young workers by banning employers from leaving minors working alone at night, and by prohibiting minors from working in high-risk industries such as asbestos removal.
 - In 2008, the province brought agricultural workers under the Employment Standards Code so that they now have a right to the minimum wage, maternity leave, vacation pay, WCB coverage, at least one day off per week and work breaks. Child labour restrictions now also apply to agricultural workers.
 - Over the past decade, strengthened workplace safety rules and increased enforcement have reduced Manitoba's workplace injury rate by 40% over the past decade.
 - Over the past decade, Manitoba has seen regular increases to the minimum wage that bring it closer to a living wage.
- Requiring the current unpaid Family and Bereavement Leave days to be paid;
 - Increasing the minimum vacation entitlement from 2 to 3 weeks/year after 1 year of employment, and from 3 to 4 weeks/year after 5 years of employment;
 - Hiring more Enforcement Officers to make sure minimum employment standards are respected;
 - Ensuring the right to have a union when a majority of workers in a workplace have signed a union card (reducing the threshold from 65% to 50%); and
 - Reducing the length and divisiveness of strikes by banning the use of replacement workers.

Policies that help keep Work and Life in Balance

It's not just fair labour laws that help balance work and home life. Other provincial policies are also key for working families:

- access to affordable child care;
- support for those who care for sick, aging or disabled family members;
- quality home care and long term care spaces for aging Manitobans;
- vibrant community centres and recreational opportunities.

Before you vote on October 4th, ask the parties where they stand on these issues that affect working families.