Restructuring
Work & Labour in
the New Economy

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The social significance of the “new economy”
For over a decade, social scientists have written about the “new economy” and the workplace changes taking place across Canada. A common assumption is that workplace changes have been largely fuelled by new technology, communication and transportation, shifts in manufacturing and service sector work, new managerial strategies, and globalization.

But the new economy is more than simply a shift to new technology in the workplace. It has changed the way Canadians work, transforming work structures and work processes. Currently, however, there is no consensus on the factors that contribute to these transformations, or on the personal, cultural, political and social significance of these changes.

A better shared understanding
Restructuring Work and Labour in the New Economy investigates social, political and economic transformations in the new economy, and examines shifting institutional adjustments as a result of the effects of globalization. Researchers are also exploring the impact of these changes on the social and cultural experience of work. While examining the proliferation of insecure and temporary work in the new economy, they are examining methods for creating quality work through public policy and employee participation.

The project brings together researchers from a dozen universities throughout Canada, from diverse areas such as labour studies, political science, women’s studies, sociology, management studies, geography and law. Eleven trade union partners represent federations of labour, as well as national and provincial labour unions in both the private and public sectors. Knowledge is shared with trade unions, community organizations, researchers and decision-makers in government and business.

This interdisciplinary alliance of academic and trade union researchers, Restructuring Work and Labour in the New Economy – Initiatives on the New Economy (RWL-INE), seeks to determine under what conditions economic changes are progressive (facilitating citizenship, social justice and well-being, and equality of access for workers) or regressive (constructing barriers to citizenship and equality, and contributing to social malaise).

A new vision for the future
The social issues affecting our world today are highly complex. Solving them requires an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach that incorporates many perspectives such as economics, sociology and history. York’s research delves deeper, providing the kind of comprehensive insights that provoke meaningful social change. A new vision for the future.

R WL - INE gathers new knowledge from research and shares that knowledge with trade unions, community organizations, researchers and decision-makers in government and business in order to improve the quality and conditions of work and community life throughout the country. Research findings are disseminated through newspaper and journal articles, scholarly books and other print media.

In addition to hosting workshops and conferences in Canada, researchers have presented their findings in conferences as far away as Vienna, Austria, Bellagio, Italy and Northumbria, England. RWL-INE recently shared its findings at a highly successful conference in Toronto – “Advancing the Union Equity Agenda: Inside Unions at the Bargaining Table” – which brought together more than 130 trade union staff and university researchers to analyze the impact of the new economy on unions and to strategize for future action.

The cost of not acting
By not exploring how the new economy has changed the nature of work in Canada, trade unions, community organizations, researchers and decision-makers in government and business will be at a serious disadvantage when it comes to breaking down barriers that impede the quality and conditions of work and community life throughout the country. The new economy will continue to be misunderstood. And without the collaboration that networks like RWL-INE provide, obstacles to sharing ideas, research findings and opportunities will remain.

Real-world solutions to real-world challenges
Real-world challenges demand different angles, different approaches, and different attitudes. Interdisciplinary and collaborative, York University research delivers relevant insights and meaningful solutions that address today’s complex social issues.