



Toronto landlords asked to abide labour code of conduct with cleaners

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Landlords and property managers in Toronto are being asked to adopt a code of conduct aimed at improving the working conditions for some of the city's lowest-paid workers.

Organizers of "Justice for Janitors" say big organizations should hire cleaning contractors who promise to meet employment standards.

Moir Hutchinison of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation said getting companies to agree to abide by a code is necessary because many janitors are in precarious employment situations.

"[They are] people who are working long hours without adequate pay, without adequate protection in terms of labour standards, and often it's difficult for governments to regulate. Often it is difficult for unions to organize these workers. A code really tries to get at the responsibility of the companies to do some self-regulation in this area," she said.

Many of those who would be covered by the code are immigrants like Eugenia Nagar. She had to complain to the Ministry of Labour in order to collect unpaid wages from the contractor she worked for.

Because of situations like Nagar's, the proposed code has garnered support from the Liberal member of Parliament for Toronto's Davenport riding, Mario Silva.

He has a personal connection — Silva's mother worked as a janitor at the Royal Bank Plaza.

"They're really making so little. And they have very little rights, very little benefits. And because of the fact that it's a pool of immigrants, they feel they can take advantage of them," he said.

The code calls on property owners to hire cleaning companies that treat workers fairly and provide benefits.

"This code of conduct is designed to put an end to this type of abuse of workers' rights in this city," said Tom Galivan of the Service Employees International Union.

The code was developed in consultation with some of the biggest landlords in Canada, including Bental Capital and Brookfield Properties.

The next step is to persuade large companies and property owners to accept it.