

Work Watch

Wage docking could be illegal

Dear Amanda,
I'm a student working part-time in a ladies' wear store. There are two other students working here as well. We don't think we're being fairly treated. Any time we can't balance at the end of the day, the owner takes the missing amount equally out of our next pay cheques. She says she can do it because it's our fault. Also, be-

cause we're in a tourist area, we're often asked to work on Sundays and holidays, but are never paid overtime for this. Is she treating us fairly?

Dear Student,
An employer can't take a deduction for missing cash from an employee's salary unless: 1) she has the written authorization of

the employee to do so or 2) that employee is the only one who has had access to the cash. If you and any other employee have had access to the cash, she is deducting the money from your paycheques illegally.

You should, in that case, ask her for a reimbursement. If she refuses, you can file a complaint with the Employment Standards

Branch of the Ministry of Labour (965-5251).

You aren't entitled to overtime pay for Sunday work unless you have already worked a total of 44 hours that week. You are entitled to time and a half pay or another day off at straight pay if you work on a public holiday under these conditions: 1) You have worked for this employee for at least three months, 2) you have earned wages on at least 12 days during the four weeks immediately preceding the public holiday and 3) you worked your regularly scheduled day preceding and following the public holiday.

Hope this helps you to sort it out.

Dear Amanda,

I own a small computer business in the Markham area. I would never have relocated here two years ago if I had known how much trouble I would have finding staff. Don't people want to work anymore? Whenever I hire someone, they either quit or I have to fire them for laziness.

They come to work with long hair and jeans and look like they're going on a picnic instead of a place of business. When I started out, I worked 12 hours a day for peanuts and was glad of the opportunity to have a job.

What's happening to this country? I'm giving serious thought to relocating to the States.

Dear "Worked for Peanuts",
They have long hair and jeans in the States, too. I doubt if relocating will solve your problems.

As you don't say exactly what you're hiring these people to do, it's impossible for me to say whether or not their apparel is appropriate. But unless it's a matter of health or safety, the length of a person's hair, as long as it's clean and well-groomed, should be irrelevant.

A company that consistently has staffing problems is a company that should take a good, honest look at itself. It's possible, of course, that you're using poor judgement in your hiring practices. Checking references is a good way to start turning that around.

It may be that you aren't competitive with other businesses in the area in terms of wages and working conditions. That should be easy enough to check.

As for your fond memories of working long hours at low wages, I'd say you either have selective recollection or you're full of baloney. No one likes to work for less than they're worth.

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