

ISSUE

Good enough to work but not good enough to stay. This is how the federal government's controversial Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) works. The TFWP allows Canadian employers to hire foreign nationals on a temporary basis. The number of migrant workers arriving in Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has more than tripled over the last decade. More than 300,000 migrant workers were present in Canada by the end of 2012. This is a major shift from Canada's traditional permanent immigration system to temporary labour migration.

CONTEXT

Migrant workers perform a wide variety of jobs. They work on farms, in offices, restaurants and hotels, and they care for elderly and children. Unfortunately, reliance on temporary migrant labour has not been accompanied by policies and actions to protect migrant workers' rights. Migrant workers in 'low-skilled' jobs (many of whom are workers of colour from low-income households) face multiple forms of exploitation. During their recruitment process, they have to pay exorbitant fees to private recruiters. Once in Canada, many have work permits that are tied to a single employer and are fearful of speaking out against workplace violations as it may get them fired and consequently deported. Most of these workers have difficulty getting access to permanent residency, and the rights, benefits and protections that come with full immigration status. Several studies have revealed that despite contributing to the economy and paying all taxes, migrant workers face barriers to access employment insurance, pensions, decent housing and other basic rights.

Canada's temporary migration and labour policies cause systemic exploitation of migrant workers and are counterproductive to building a stable labour force and a socially inclusive society. The federal government must ensure workers of all skill levels have access to apply to

immigrate and arrive with status. Full immigration status must be recognized as the most fundamental means to protect migrant workers' rights and ensure their social inclusion.

QUESTIONS

1. Will your party support status upon arrival and pathways to permanent residency for all migrant workers? If so, what actions will it take to that end?
2. What actions will your party take to ensure migrant workers enjoy protections against employer abuses and recruitment fees?
3. What steps will your party take to remove barriers for migrant workers to access important benefits, such as employment insurance and pensions?

RESOURCES

For more information specifically on migrant workers, contact Migrant Workers Alliance for Change - info@migrantworkersalliance.org.

For additional fact sheets in this series:
<http://spno.ca/canada-votes-2015>