



## Protecting Migrant Worker rights in Canada

### Meeting with Your Member of Parliament about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

#### 1. Plan the meeting

- Plan your remarks carefully and be selective. You can't hope to communicate everything. It is better for the MP to go away with a clear message, than to be confused by too much information.
- If possible, find out in advance a bit about what the MP has done or said relating to immigration policy in general or on migrant workers in particular (you can do a search on the Parliamentary website at: [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca) or use: [www.openparliament.ca](http://www.openparliament.ca))

#### 2. During the meeting

Keep your comments brief to leave time for an engaging discussion with the MP and ask them for their commitments, instead of presenting to the MP for the entire meeting. Press for a straight answer. Does your representative agree or disagree with you?

##### a) Introduction / Ice Breaker (2 minutes)

Thank the MP for the opportunity to speak to them. Introduce yourself, your organization and if you live/work in the constituency. Explain your connection to migrant workers and immigration issues.

##### b) Identify the Issues (10 minutes)

You would like to discuss your concerns about the lack of protections for migrant workers taking part in the "low-skilled" streams of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP), including the Low-skill/low-wage workers, caregivers, and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). Depending on where you are coming from and the issues you want to focus on, here are some suggestions:

- The shortcomings of the program are issues within the broader topic of temporary labour migration to Canada, so you may want to mention your concern at the government's trend towards temporary labour migration programs rather than permanent immigration.
- The overarching position of CCR is that instead of relying on temporary migrant labour from workers who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, Canada should revise the economic immigration program to include workers of all skill levels, including people who will fill low-skilled positions.  
[ccrweb.ca/en/res/expanding-economic-immigration-workers-all-skill-levels](http://ccrweb.ca/en/res/expanding-economic-immigration-workers-all-skill-levels)
- If you would like to echo the positions of the CCR, the three axes of our campaign for migrant workers' rights are:
  - a) Protection of rights
  - b) Access to permanent residence
  - c) Access to services, including settlement services and language instruction

Here are some of CCR's key demands for protecting the rights of migrant workers as long as the TFWP and SAWP exist:

- ✓ Employer-specific work permits don't allow migrant workers to quit and find another job if they are being mistreated. Work permits should be sector-specific.
- ✓ To eliminate the vulnerability they face, migrant workers require access to secure status.

It should be noted that existing pathways to permanent residence such as those available to workers in the Caregiver program and in some provinces via Provincial Nominee Programs make workers overly

dependent on their employer to sponsor them, which can entail additional vulnerabilities. All migrant workers should have the right to apply for permanent resident status at the same time as they apply for the work permit.

- ✓ Migrant workers shouldn't have to suffer years of separation from their family members, which can lead to mental health problems and family breakdown. They should be able to sponsor family when they apply for permanent residence soon after arriving in Canada, as in the point above.
- ✓ Migrant workers' rights must be protected. Low-skilled migrant workers are vulnerable to abuse because of factors including their closed work permits, isolation, lack of information on their rights, and language barriers. Complaint-based enforcement of regulations such as Employment Standards and Occupational Health and Safety are ineffective, because even where workers know their rights and have access to complaints mechanisms, they are often unwilling to complain for fear of losing their employment and being repatriated. There must be proactive monitoring of employers.
  - Although employment standards is a provincial jurisdiction, the TFWP and SAWP are federal government programs, so the federal government must take responsibility and action to work with the provinces to ensure the rights of migrant workers are protected, as in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.
  - Despite changes by the previous government in 2014, few employers have been monitored for compliance by federal government inspectors, and as of January 2017 only three had faced any consequences for violations, despite widespread reports of abuse.
- ✓ Migrant workers should be eligible for federally funded settlement services, including language instruction. Without these services, migrant workers have very little access to support and information, exacerbating their vulnerability to abuse.

#### d) Solutions/Requests to MP (2 minutes)

Urge your MP to press for:

- a) A revision of the economic immigration program to include a low-skilled stream in order to reflect Canada's diverse labour needs
- b) In the meantime, all participants of the TFWP and SAWP should have the right to apply for permanent residence (not – as is currently the case – only those deemed “high-skilled”)
- c) Proactive monitoring, either via collaboration with provincial governments, or via federal monitoring of program rules and regulations.
- d) Migrant workers in the TFWP and the SAWP to be eligible for federally funded settlement services

\*Try to leave the meeting with a straight answer from the MP\*

#### e) Questions from your MP

Your MP may have questions about the changes to the Temporary Foreign Workers Program or about migrant workers in Canada in general. You can give them a copy of the following documents:

- ✓ *CCR Submission to HUMA Committee during TFWP review*: <http://bit.ly/2jL8BYm>
- ✓ *Migrant Workers: Precarious and Unsupported (National report)*: <http://bit.ly/2kGVR3C>
- ✓ *Migrant Workers Report Card: Federal government*: [ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/fed\\_report\\_card.pdf](http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/fed_report_card.pdf)

#### f) Thank You and Follow-up (1 minute)

Thank the MP for his/her time. Recap the commitments made and promise to follow up with their office.

\*\*\* Please be in touch! Let us know how your meeting went, get in touch with Marisa at [marisa@ccrweb.ca](mailto:marisa@ccrweb.ca) \*\*\*