



Backgrounder

Forced Labour Happens in Canada: call for justice and protection for precarious migrants

10 June, 2020: Forced labour happens in Canada but existing government programs and policies fail to protect precarious status migrants who are those most likely to be in situations of labour trafficking. The current pandemic crisis only amplifies their precarity.

Protection is urgently needed for exploited non-status migrants!

Human rights and social justice must be placed at the centre of immigration policies and programs that currently make people vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.

The problem

Through fraud, coercion, deception and exploitation, some migrants in Canada find themselves in situations of forced labour, a form of human trafficking. Yet, existing remedies fall short of providing protection or justice.

The Temporary Resident Permit for Victims of Human Trafficking (VTIP-TRP) is the only available federal tool for protecting internationally trafficked persons in Canada. TRPs are issued at the discretion of the immigration officer, inconsistently, and in different ways across regions. Trafficked persons who fail to get TRPs are left in limbo, without protection.

Canada creates the conditions that make people vulnerable to forced labour, by bringing people here on work permits tied to a single employer, and not paying enough attention to how they are recruited and their living and working conditions.

The solution

The federal government must:

- Make VTIP-TRPs accessible to trafficked persons in a way that reflects how people are coerced and exploited in Canada. This grounded understanding of international trafficking in Canada needs to be consistently applied across all provinces.
- Collaborate with front-line workers who have expert understanding of how recruitment, deception, fraud, coercion are means to exploit people in Canada.
- Seize this unprecedented opportunity to put human rights and social justice at the centre of immigration policies and programs as reflected in our long-term policy demands.

As a country we create the precarity that we are trying to change. When things go sour, there are few options for protecting the human rights of trafficked persons.

Sue Wilson, Office for Systemic Justice, Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada

Immigration officers seem to lack knowledge of how people are pulled out of status; how people are being lured to come to Canada through fraudulent recruitment practices. VTIP-TRP interviews are being conducted based on outdated understanding of human trafficking.

Shelley Gilbert, Legal Assistance of Windsor, Co-chair of the CCR Anti-Trafficking Committee