

Coalition for Migrant Worker Rights - Canada (CMWRC)
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Media Release
October 28, 2015

**Canada wide migrant worker coalition calls on Trudeau to MoVE for Real Change.
Newly launched Coalition for Migrant Worker Rights - Canada calls for end to
discrimination against migrant workers.**

October 28, 2015: Charlottetown, PEI – Migrant worker groups from PEI to British Columbia held media events today to call upon the new Liberal government to end the practice of tying temporary foreign workers to their employer – a practice the groups are calling discriminatory. The Coalition for Migrant Workers Rights - Canada (CMWRC), is a coalition of organizations representing Canadian born and migrant worker groups from coast to coast, aimed at improving work conditions for all workers. At the media conference in Charlottetown, Josie Baker of Cooper Institute introduced the coalition's first campaign: *MoVE – Mobility, Voice and Equality for Migrant Workers*. “This campaign calls on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to undo the harm done by the Harper government,” Baker said, “and to move towards a single-tier immigration system based on permanency and family reunification as a way to ensure decent work for all.”

Low-waged Temporary Foreign Workers, Caregivers and Seasonal Agricultural Workers have status in Canada in the form of work permits that restrict them to working for a specific employer. Although changing employers is possible, it is almost prohibitively difficult and costly. CMWRC identifies this practice as having a negative effect on work conditions in Canada. “When you have policies that in essence hold part of the workforce as captive to one employer, it opens the door for abuse, lower salaries, and degraded work conditions for all workers” says Baker. “A first step to ending this downward cycle is to untie the permits so workers have the ‘**mobility**’ to leave employers who exploit them. Next steps must include reorienting the system to secure, permanent immigration that protects ‘**voice**’ and ‘**equality**’ for workers.”

Representatives of four local groups made statements in support of the campaign. Craig Walsh spoke on behalf of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). Karen Murchison spoke on behalf of the PEI Food Security Network. Sara Roach-Lewis of Women's Network PEI spoke about her family's relationship with migrant workers: “they would have made such wonderful long-term additions to our community as hard-working, positive, creative and loving people but despite our efforts, they couldn't immigrate to Canada.”

Mary Cowper-Smith also spoke in support of the MoVE campaign on behalf of the Council of Canadians – PEI Chapter: “These changes would go a long way in creating a system that ensures a reliable source of labour for Canadian employers, safer working and living conditions for both migrant and local workers, and which gives justice and dignity to those who currently have no voice.”

PEI employers have been particularly hard hit by the most recent round of changes, announced in 2014, to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, which terminated the employment of migrant workers in restaurants, stores, and the hospitality industry. The Maritime seafood processing industry has also been deeply affected by the changes which has forced the progressive layoff of migrant workers.

CMWRC points to the bigger picture and a shift in Canadian immigration: “Over the past decade, deep changes were made to Canada’s immigration system that bring migrant workers into the country with temporary status under conditions that predictably leave them vulnerable to exploitation by employers and recruiters,” says labour and human rights lawyer Fay Faraday. “Tied work permits, mandatory removal after four years and lack of pathways to permanent status drive real precariousness for migrant workers. There is an opportunity now for a fresh start to rebuild the system on principles of security, decent work and permanence.”

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MoVE Demands

- Regulatory changes to make it easier for migrant workers to move between jobs thereby improving working and living conditions for Canadian born and migrant workers. Specifically:

- Transition from tied work permits to open work permits
- Remove limits on work permits and restrictions on Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIA) including a 4-year time limit on workers ability to stay.

- Permanent resident immigration status upon arrival for migrant workers.

WHO: Founding members of CMWRC:

- Cooper Institute (PEI)
- Migrant Workers Alliance for Change*
- Migrante Canada
- Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (Okanagan Valley)
- Temporary Foreign Workers Association in Quebec
- Temporary Foreign Workers Coalition in Alberta

- Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregiver Rights (Vancouver)

*Migrant Workers Alliance for Change includes Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (Toronto), Asian Community Aids Services (Ontario), Caregivers Action Centre (Ontario), Fuerza Pwersa (Guelph), Industrial Accident Victims' Group of Ontario, Justicia for Migrant Workers (Ontario), KAIROS Canada, Legal Assistance of Windsor, Migrante Ontario, No One Is Illegal – Toronto, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Social Planning Toronto, UNIFOR (Canada), South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, United Food and Commercial Workers (Canada), Workers United and the Workers' Action Centre (Toronto).

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