

## **Briefing Note**

### **Report:** [“Canada Has Destroyed Me” - Labour Exploitation of Migrant Workers in Canada](#)

#### **Issue**

People who come to Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) carry out essential work, primarily in low-pay sectors – they keep Canada’s agriculture, food-processing, caregiving, and construction, and hospitality sectors going. Instead of being treated the same as Canadians doing this work, TFWP workers are tied to a single employer, who controls their immigration status, labour conditions, and sometimes their housing and transportation.

#### **Key Findings**

Tied visas under the TFWP put migrant workers at higher risk of labour exploitation and other rights abuses

- Workers in the TFWP are subjected to long working hours without breaks or rest; wage theft; inadequate housing and medical care; unsafe working conditions which sometimes lead to serious injuries; verbal, physical, sexual and psychological abuse; and discrimination.

Tied visas hamper migrant workers’ access to adequate remedies

- Migrant workers struggle to report abuses due to the risk of reprisals – including unfair dismissal, non-renewal of contracts, and repatriation to their country of origin – and Canada’s complex labour enforcement system. Language barriers, lack of support, precarious status, and intersecting identities make access to justice out of reach for many. TFWP’s structural features, inadequate provincial labour standards, and restrictions on unionization exacerbate workers' vulnerability.

The TFWP’s structure ensures that racialized migrant workers are overrepresented and disproportionately impacted.

- TFWP visas intentionally target racialized people from the Global South. Designed to provide tied visas to "low-skilled" workers from "developing countries," the program uses skills and nationality as proxies for class and race, reflecting colonial histories. Many racialized workers are separated from their families for long periods, have their labour extracted, and are then disposed of at the will of their employer if they fall sick, suffer injuries or speak out. Workers under the TFWP face intentionally limited pathways to permanent residency, maintaining their precarious status and allowing for further exploitation.

By enabling the above, Canada has violated its international legal obligations, including the right to just and favorable work conditions, effective remedies, and freedom from discrimination.

#### **Recommendations**

To Federal Authorities:

- Abolish closed work permits, which make workers vulnerable to abuse.
- Grant open work permits to TFWP workers, allowing them the same freedom to change employers that Canadians enjoy.
- Remove discriminatory permanent residence eligibility criteria for “low-skilled” workers.
- Ensure redress is available for human rights violations:
  - Adopt protective measures and prevent the repatriation of migrant workers who launch complaints

To Provincial Authorities:

- Align provincial employment standards with Canada’s international obligations.
- Repeal laws which limit collective bargaining and unionizing for migrant workers.
- Ensure migrant workers’ complaints are examined and adjudicated fairly, speedily and effectively.