

Call your MP Guide

Thank you for taking action to promote the rights of migrant workers. Amnesty International is encouraging you to reach out to your government representative (Member of Parliament or MP) to tell them that you believe that all workers, regardless of where they come from, should be treated with dignity and have their rights respected. You can educate your MPs about the abuses that take place in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, explain that you believe that all workers should have the freedom to change employers, and call on the government to grant open work permits to all workers.

Steps:

1. Find your MP's name and contact information by typing in your postal code here: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en>
2. Research your MP. Is this an issue they have spoken about before? Can you connect the issue to something they are interested in?
3. Think about the key message(s) that you want your MP to hear, what you are asking of them, and how to encourage them to act.
4. Call your MP and ask them to follow up with you.
5. Encourage your friends, family and community to reach out so that your MP knows that this is an issue that many constituents care about.

Tips:

- Research your MP. Based on their history, interests, and work, is there an angle that might be most persuasive to them? For example, focusing on workers' rights and safety, racial justice, gender justice, access to healthcare, etc.
- When you introduce yourself, be sure to mention that you are their constituent/in their riding.
- Explain why this issue matters to you.
- Provide an explanation of why closed work permits are harmful and why you are calling for open work permits.
- Leave with a parting ask, and mention that you and your (community group, neighbours, etc.) are all concerned about this issue and will all be anxiously waiting to hear back from them about what the government (or their party) can do about the issue
- If they ask you a question and you are unsure of the answer, you can commit to get back to them. It is okay to say that you don't know.

- If you are uncomfortable with speaking to someone, consider calling during the evening and leaving a message.

Key points to consider mentioning:

- All workers in Canada should be treated with dignity and have their rights respected
- People in Canada's TFWP keep Canada's food, caregiving, construction, hospitality, and many other essential sectors going. They are essential workers.
 - However, unlike Canadians doing the same work, they are tied to a single employer who controls their immigration status and working conditions.
- Tied work permits put workers at increased risk of exploitation and makes it difficult to change jobs even if they are mistreated.
- Many workers endure wage theft, unsafe working conditions, discrimination and abuse, but struggle to change employers, access protection or justice, or obtain permanent residency
- Workers face reprisals if they speak out. Some are fired or sent home.
- Workers in the TFWP are separated from their families, have their labour extracted, and are treated as disposable, especially if they are injured on the job or speak out about abuse.
- Everyone should have the freedom to choose and change their employer. I am calling on the government to grant open work permits to all workers.

Sample Script

Hello, my name is [first name last name]. I live in [neighbourhood] and am a constituent of [MP name].

I am calling to express my concerns about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. I have learned that workers in the TFWP are tied to a single employer, and cannot freely change jobs. According to research reports by Amnesty International [feel free to also list other sources], closed work permits put workers at increased risk of abuse, and many face things like wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and discrimination.

This issue matters to me because [insert reason – workers in the TFWP carry out essential work that you benefit from; migrant workers are your neighbours/live in your community; you are a migrant worker/know migrant workers; etc.]. I thought that this issue would also be of interest to MP [name], because they [insert connection to their work, statement they have made, a time when they expressed interest about the issue, fact that migrant workers live/work in their constituency, etc.]

I am joining thousands of others in calling on the government to grant open work permits to all workers, because all workers should be treated with dignity and enjoy the same right that you and I have – the right to freely change employers.

Will you commit to raising this issue in your party caucus?

I have spoken about it with my [friends, family, neighbours, community group, etc.] and we all look forward to hearing back from you about this. [Leave contact information so that they can follow up with you].

Thank you for your time.

Frequently asked questions/and responses from government

1. Open work permits for vulnerable workers

- a. Common government response: The government has taken steps to address this, including by introducing the open work permit for vulnerable workers, which enables workers who have experience abuse to find a new employer
- b. Your follow up: This program is not adequate for a number of reasons
 - i. People may experience reprisals before they are even granted an open work permit – their employer might cancel their existing work permit (making them ineligible to apply for an open work permit) or their employer might try to send them back home.
 - ii. It can be difficult to prove that you were abused, so there is no guarantee that workers will be granted an open work permit, making leaving their job or speaking out risky.
 - iii. The open work permit for vulnerable workers only lasts for one year. At the end of the year, workers have to return to a closed permit that puts them at increased risk of abuse once again.
 - iv. Workers have expressed that some employers view the open work permit for vulnerable workers as a sign that the worker is a “trouble maker” and do not want to hire workers with this permit.

2. Rights of workers in the TFWP

- a. Common government response: Workers in the TFWP have the same rights as Canadian workers
- b. Your follow up: while TFWP workers have the same labour rights on paper as Canadian workers, they do not have the same right to freely change employers, which puts them at higher risk of abuse and labour exploitation. Closed work permits make TFWP workers dependent on their employers to

enjoy fair working conditions or effectively access their rights, including housing, and health care.

- i. In some provinces, sectors disproportionately filled by workers in the TFWP are exempted from key labour protections. For example, farm workers in Ontario are not entitled to a minimum wage, overtime pay, daily rest periods, or limits on work hours.

3. Increased inspections

- a. Common government response: refer to inspections conducted
- b. Your follow up: while effective, proactive, and targeted labour inspections can deter abuses, protect migrant workers, and help enforce labour and health/safety standards, they will not end labour exploitation because they do not change the structure of the TFWP (closed work permits), which is what puts people at increased risk of labour exploitation.

4. For other Frequently Asked Questions, please visit <https://amnesty.ca/temporary-foreign-workers-report/> and scroll to the bottom of the webpage.