

Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) FEDERAL AGENDA

New Westminster, August 26, 2026



Hon. Mark Carney
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Fax: 613-941-6900

cc: Hon. Minister of Immigration: Lena Metlege Diab
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Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you to highlight the need for amendments to the Canadian Laws to protect hundreds of thousands of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) “guest workers” who greatly contribute to the economy and culture of our country and were once called heroes of our nation, much like the Chinese Canadian immigrants who built our countries railroads. The pandemic has shone a bright light on the systematic mistreatment of TFW across the country. These mistreatments of TFW now threaten food security and the safety of everyone in the country. Protecting them means guarding everyone in Canada. Now is the time to end migrants' abuses and make meaningful changes. Now is the time to provide dignified protection to all those essential workers that all of us call heroes.

Our organization, [Dignidad Migrante Society \(La DIGNIDAD\)](#), is the only organization across Canada composed of and run by (TFW) from many countries. Black, indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) who voluntarily build the house where our voices matter. We promote the organization of TFWs in general, and agricultural workers in particular to prevent abuse, exploitation, racism, discrimination, human and labour traffic, gain rights, have benefits, guarantee our physical and mental health, and solve our daily problems, helping each other in the good and bad times through free services, while we are in Canada

During 18 years, we have received minimal to no government funding. We are a volunteer-run to help TFW with translation, income tax procedures, paternity, care of a sick relative, pension, open work permit, medical support, food, medicine, and help in any emergency. La DIGNIDAD also defends TFW who suffered abuse, and represents them at WorkSafe, ESB and HR tribunals. La DIGNIDAD also celebrates Mother's Day, Father's Day, Day of the Dead, International Migrant Day, and promotes the self-organization of TFW and stands up for their rights at work with different workshops about Rights and Benefits, Health Insurance, Immigration, Preventing Work Accidents, CPP, Human Rights, ESB claims, etc. In summary we provide 88 different services and 24 projects among these that we

described above.

We hope that the brief background expressed would provide you the context in which migrant workers from developing countries are recruited to work in Canada by labour brokers in their own countries, or by unscrupulous employers and immigrant consultants once they arrive in Canada.

Our experience in helping migrant workers access their rights has taught us about the inequities in law and its administration across the country. We urge you, without any further delay, to adopt the following changes required to provide decent and basic protections for all migrant workers and to uphold the Canadian promise of dignity and fairness to all.

1. OPEN WORK PERMITS FOR ALL

- We should not be tied to a single employer, like modern slaves, but should be free to seek employment during the duration of our stay in Canada. The mobility through Open Work Permit would be one of the most effective actions to prevent abuses to us. This kind of work permit can't be substituted for a regional, sectorial, or any other kind of work permit.

2. PARTICIPATION IN THE CREATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

- Currently, workers in the SAWP, AGFOOD or TFW mainstream or in any other program in construction, cleaning, caregiver, etc., have no say in the content of our contracts which are prepared by employers with the input of the federal government. TFW must participate in the drafting to guarantee the same rights that Canadians have. Short of having the same rights as all Canadians places TFW immediately in a precarious position, which disadvantages the rest of the work force by having a two-tier system of workers. The law should encompass everyone on an equal basis.

3. AMNESTY FOR ALL THE UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

- Undocumented workers provide essential services and are an integral part of the Canadian economy. These workers are at even greater risk of both becoming ill and/or losing their livelihood. We demand that all undocumented workers are granted amnesty from deportation and provided with a pathway to regularize their immigration status that will help them to finish their claim to working compensation boards and Employment Standard in each province.

4. AGAINST LABOUR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- One of the most common abuses we face is being denied the freedom of movement. Employers often prohibit and punish their workers for leaving the property and for inviting their friends over to their residence. There is no governmental action to protect workers against that. Similarly, withholding private documents like passports and work permits, borrowing or subcontracting workers from other employers, paying less than agreed amounts, delaying payments, charging workers for hiring them, and providing overcrowded and substandard housing are all elements of human trafficking which must be stopped. La DIGNIDAD has already urged the creation of enforcement mechanisms, such as a task force to monitor employers and establish concrete penalties to employers to dissuade these practices. Furthermore, the government must require that employers allow any TFW support organization to visit workers' housing to educate us on how to protect ourselves against abuse and human trafficking, and establish a clear plan on how to legally protect workers from employer retaliation.

5. PARTICIPATION IN THE REVIEW OR CHANGES IN THE TFW PROGRAMS.

- Until now all the programs have been created by employers and the government,

excluding workers' voices about the labour and living conditions, the health issues, transportation, and employer responsibilities and workers' rights and protection. La DIGNIDAD calls on the government to listen and consider our opinion in any issue related to the TFW program and that may affect us.

6. ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES WORKSHOP

- Employers are frequently unreliable in their responsibility to inform their workers on their rights and responsibilities, therefore, La DIGNIDAD insists that the government mandate that all employers of TFW seek out a two hour, paid workshop on the workers' rights and responsibilities upon their arrival in Canada. The workshop must be performed by an organization that we trust.

7. PATHWAY TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY

- Canada's pathways to permanent residency are extremely limited, discriminatory, and exclude those who are deemed "low-skilled", including seasonal workers, in spite of the fact that they provide utterly essential labour such as growing, harvesting, and processing our food, building our houses and taking care of our relatives. All TFW who want permanent residency should be able to obtain it by eliminating the English proficiency requirement by seniority. Canadian workers should have the right to be Canadian citizens.

8. FILL OUT THE GAPS IN THE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR TFW

- We usually work 10 to 16 hours a day, Monday to Saturday and often Sunday. Accessibility to essential services is extremely limited due to our work hours. We have no chance to visit offices that could help us because these are mostly in cities, open only from 9am to 4 or 5 PM, Monday to Friday, just at the time that we are working. As TFW we insist that funding organizations, like La DIGNIDAD who assist TFW during evening, weekends, and have mobile services since 2006, is the best way to support TFW.

9. ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION

- We demand that the government take action to ensure that we are not discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and gender identity and any other grounds protected by the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. In particular, workers demand action be taken to protect migrant women from harassment and abuse in the workplace. Legislation should also be implemented to penalize employers who engage in discrimination, ensuring that such actions are not treated merely as a cost of doing business, with minimal fines and little to no acknowledgment of wrongdoing.

10. PAYMENT COMMENSURATE WITH ACTUAL WORK

- Many of us are hired as general farm workers or manual labourers; however, the absence of government actions to supervise that the contract is respected, once in the workplace, allows employers to give us that minimum wage for manually-skilled work, but often we are requested to do work without proper training or payment that require further skills like driving, mechanic, forklift operator, carpenter, cement machine operator, etc. This kind of work requires higher wages. Employers reap the benefit of getting workers with several skills at minimum wage; this is wrong. La DIGNIDAD demands that TFW be paid based on the work they actually perform. Currently, there is a legal loophole: as long as the TFW's primary duties match what is listed in the contract, employers face no punishment for assigning additional skilled work. This must change. Any contractual violation, including assigning tasks outside of the agreed terms without fair pay, should be taken seriously. Employers who do this should be held accountable, and workers should be compensated accordingly.

11. CREATION OF AN EMERGENCY WORKERS' RESOURCE FUND

- As Migrant Workers we are in a permanent state of emergency. So in recognition of our contributions to the Canadian economy, and the vulnerable positions we hold, La DIGNIDAD proposes the government create an emergency resource fund that workers can access in times of need, and that can be accessed by grassroots, community or workers organizations directly. What exists today managed by ESDC through organization like MOSAIC and DIVERSEcity, doesn't fulfill the requirements of an emergency because they are too bureaucratic and limited just to people who have work permits, and doesn't consider payment for medical attention, or even for returning to their homeland.

12. PROVIDE FUNDING DIRECTLY TO WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS.

- Usually the Federal Government allocates funding to big organizations like MOSAIC or DIVERSEcity who have zero or minimum knowledge about TFW reality and need. These organizations only distribute the funding to settlement organizations that in most of the cases use the funding to provide services during TFWs' working hours, 9 am to 5PM, Monday to Friday, or to other populations like refugee claimants. It leaves us without real support. La DIGNIDAD insists on the need to fund TFW organizations directly, or establish a clear mandate that funding must include us, otherwise the exclusion of organizations like La DIGNIDAD, and TFW will continue,

13. FACILITATING FAMILY REUNIFICATION.

- We spend a large portion of each year, sometimes two to 3 years in Canada and are not able to see our families. The Canadian government should require employers to either pay for a flight ticket for a short visit home to TFW who work at least 6 months, mandate the payment of 2 week vacations to the workers to enable them to visit their families, or implement a program that allows our relatives to visit us. The housing and expenses of the visit must be covered by the employer. Mental health is essential, and family reunification plays a critical role in supporting it

14. ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (EI) BENEFITS LIKE CANADIANS.

- It is not true that we have the same rights that Canadians have. We have been paying EI for over half a century without collecting the benefits. Only after 35 years of paying EI, did we get access to the Paternal benefit (2001). And this was only for a short period because in December 2012, the conservative government cut these benefits. Our ceaseless efforts to access these benefits finally granted us access in 2013, but limited as long as our work permit is valid. The dependence on a single employer, who can lay us off any time, makes us extremely vulnerable for not having the right to collect regular benefits. La DIGNIDAD urges the government to allow us full access to EI as Canadians do to protect us from the whims of our employers. Having the Open Work Permit will facilitate full access to EI.

15. ENSURING ACCESS TO SAFE HOUSING

- La DIGNIDAD demands the development and implementation of national housing standards for migrant workers that prevent overcrowding and protect workers' privacy and health. We also request no payment for rent, and the creation of an independent civil commission for inspection and to enforce employers respect laws, rules and regulations respecting housing for migrant workers.

16. DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL PUBLIC REGISTRY OF TFW

- As migrant workers we are invisible in Canada, which makes us vulnerable to abuse and prevents us from accessing services. The federal government can improve our conditions by promoting our struggles and creating spaces where we can access

support during our off times. The public should have access not only to statistics on how many workers are in various industries, but also to information about complaints related to living and working conditions and which companies hire TFW. This will enable data-driven decision and policy-making at all levels of government.

17. UNANNOUNCED WORKPLACES INSPECTIONS

- As the current complaints-driven system doesn't work and MUST be complemented with active inspection and enforcement. The government should ensure that employers who hire us must be subject to random, unannounced inspections of working and living conditions, which include workers and supporting organization participation. Results of inspections should be publicly accessible. Those visits should not be the result of workers' complaints but as a mandate.

18. MAKE EMPLOYER ACCOUNTABLE

- The Federal and Provincial Government must create a system where we can anonymously be enabled to write reviews of our employers about working conditions, living conditions, freedom of movement, respect of the contract, so that the government can take note of which employers are compliant with the law and which are not.

19. ACCESS TO UNIVERSAL MEDICAL CARE

- All TFW must get access to the Medical Service Plan without any waiting period in the provinces, as the RCMP members. Rather than leaving this decision to the respective provincial governments. For example Ontario eliminated the three-month wait period that BC and other provinces continue to have. Even if health services are organized and funded by provinces, there's nothing against the federal government mandating provinces to enable TFW immediate access to the "universal" health care system.

20. ENSURE ACCESS TO ADEQUATE PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

- While workers in the SAWP have access to reasonable private medical benefits, TFW outside this program typically do not. La DIGNIDAD requests that the government must mandate that any kind of private insurance provided by the employer to us is equal with that provided to SAWP workers, and that it includes access to short-term disability and dental coverage.

21. PROTECTION FROM RETALIATION

- Migrant workers must know that speaking out will not cost them their livelihood and that the Canadian government will punish employers who commit retaliation. The government must guarantee that any TFW who have been fired from their employment as a result of denouncing any kind of abuses, violence or suffering work accidents, are reinstated and rehired the following season. Contracts should include long-term timeframes, even if the worker is only employed for part of the year. Employers who violate these terms should face meaningful penalties. Stability and accountability must be built into the system. Furthermore, those pursuing legal action against the abuse they have faced should be allowed to remain in Canada with an Open Work Permit, at the very least until the conclusion of their case, and ideally with a pathway to permanent residency, as is the practice in the USA in favor of these people who suffered violence, for example.

22. ENSURING CONSULTANTS AND RECRUITERS RESPECT THE LAW

- Unscrupulous immigrant consultants, lawyers, and recruiters in workers' home countries and often in Canada charge high fees for processing documents and there

are significant issues with fraud perpetrated against TFW. The government must ensure that these consultants and recruiters are held accountable, including taking steps to hold employers responsible for the actions of the recruitment or administrative agencies they work with abroad.

23. SUPPORT ACTION WHEN NATURAL DISASTER HAPPENED

- As a result of climate change, extreme weather events occur at higher frequencies every year causing TFW to lose their livelihoods and be at risk of injury. On top of that, we do not have access to benefits that compensate for our losses like Canadians. La DIGNIDAD requests that the government allow TFW affected by the disasters to work in any activity available in the affected region and support TFW through the aftermath just as they would for Canadians in their positions.

24. MOBILITY AMONG PROVINCES

- Being tied to a single employer increases our vulnerability to abuse, exploitation, and retaliation for voicing our concerns. We can't even apply for Employment Insurance if we lose our livelihood at the whim of the employer because of the nature of our work permit. La DIGNIDAD requested that mobility among provinces be granted among the occupations described in the work permit. This would mean tying the worker to the occupation instead of the employer.

Dear Prime Minister,

We are available to work with your government to make these changes. We urge your government to fix the system that has perpetuated abuses and exploitation in a country that calls itself a human rights champion.

We have also copied you on our letter to the Provincial Premier outlining the changes required to provincial legislation and administration in British Columbia. We encourage you to work with our Premier and the other Premiers to coordinate response to the changes required throughout the country.

Sincerely,

Dignidad Migrante Society

TFW Board of Directors

We help each other in the good and bad times



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