



Migrant workers deserve fair and equal treatment



Migrant workers make important contributions to Canada and Ontario's economy, performing a wide variety of jobs in various industries, from working on farms, to caring for children and the elderly, to working in offices, restaurants, and hotels. Ontario receives the highest number of migrant workers than any other province, with nearly 120,000 workers present in 2012. Despite their critical contributions, migrant workers in 'low-skill' jobs (many of whom are workers of colour from low-income households) have difficulty in gaining access to permanent residency in Canada and the rights, benefits and protections that come with full immigration status. Ontario laws in particular exclude migrant workers from services and protections.

- **Exploitation:** Migrant workers are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation from unscrupulous bosses and recruiters due to their temporary immigration status and work permits being tied to a single employer. Workers are often fearful of speaking out against workplace violations or refusing to perform unsafe work, as this may jeopardize their chances of getting work permits renewed or face deportation if they are fired from their job.
- **Exclusion:** Under current Ontario laws many migrant workers are excluded from basic rights and protections such as minimum wage laws, occupational health and safety, workers' compensation, and provincial health care coverage.
- **Fees:** Many migrant workers are also forced to pay thousands of dollars in fees to recruitment agencies in order to work in Ontario, leaving workers and families in considerable debt. Ontario has yet to regulate recruiters.

Advocates have been demanding that Ontario take immediate and meaningful action to improve the working and living conditions for migrant workers and ensure that migrant workers have the same basic rights and protections as citizens. Many of the jobs that migrant workers perform are by no means temporary, and they have been traditionally performed by immigrants who previously had access to permanent immigration status. All workers should receive full status upon arrival and have the right to bring their family members to Ontario to settle permanently.

Ask your candidates:

- What actions will you take to ensure all workers in Ontario have access to basic labour rights and protections?
- What steps will your party take to eliminate recruitment fees paid by migrant workers coming to work in Ontario?
- What will your party do to create provincial and federal access to permanent residency for migrant workers?

Resources:

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change: www.migrantworkersalliance.org

Justice for Migrant Workers: www.justicia4migrantworkers.org

Workers' Action Centre: www.workersactioncentre.org

