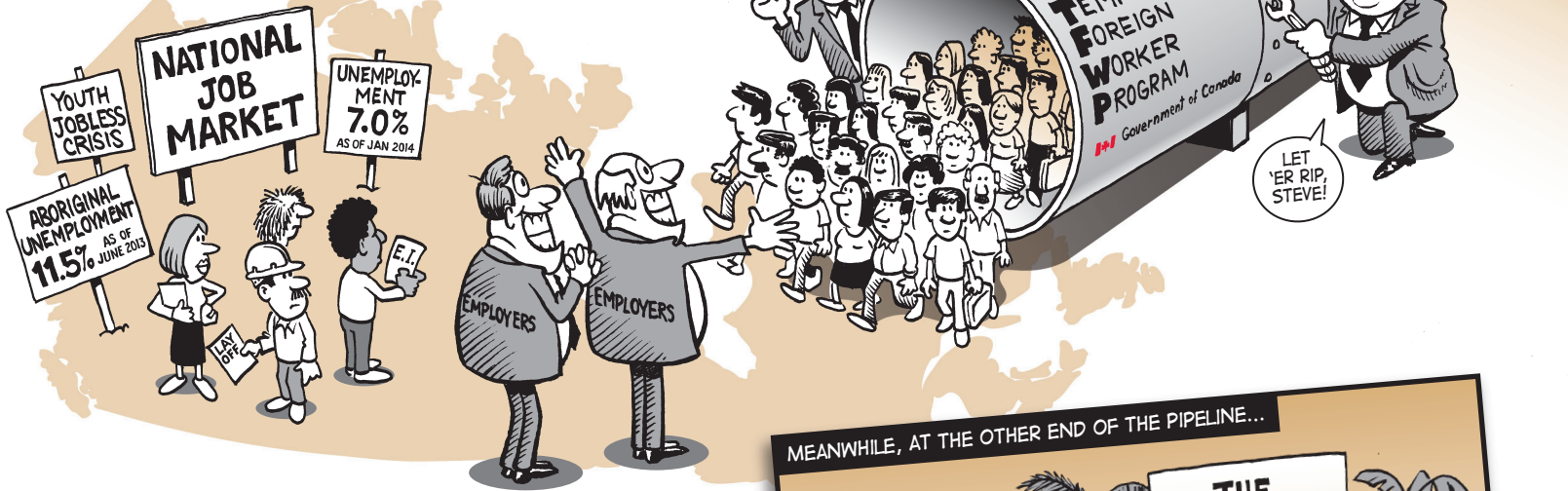


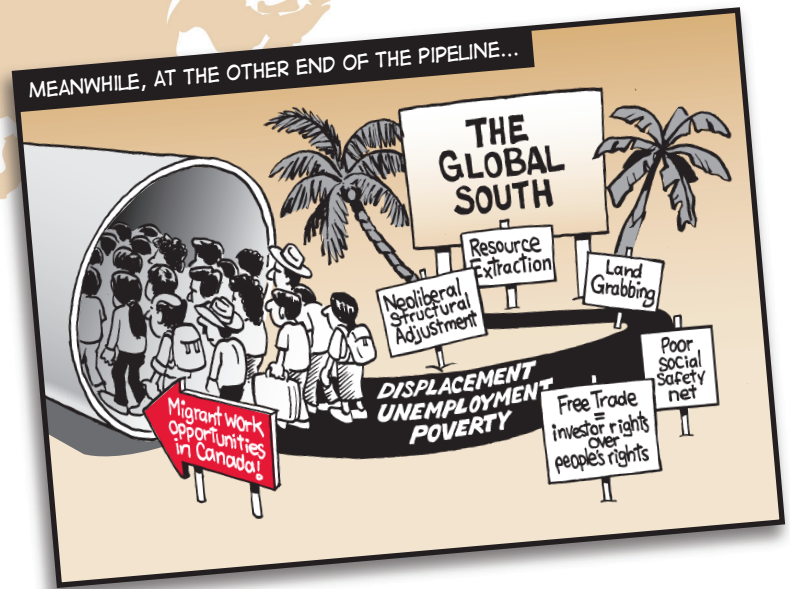
How the Conservatives expanded the temporary worker pipeline

Who benefits and who gets hurt?



For decades, Canada has relied on migrant workers to help develop the economy. Many come through the government's **Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)**. This program was intended to fill very specific jobs on a short term basis—jobs that required workers and skills that did not exist in the country.

But since 2006, the Harper government has made it **much** easier for employers of **all kinds** to use migrant workers. It's like they've built a pipeline that can be easily tapped into. Employers were invited to recruit migrant workers to almost every sector of the economy, from agriculture, to construction, to health care, to retail, even media and government. Employers are now able to hire temporary migrant workers to harvest crops, fly planes, drive trucks, care for children and elders, respond to trouble tickets on IT help desks, and—incredibly—serve coffee at Tim Hortons and flip burgers at Wendy's!



➔ **The Harper government effectively changed the purpose of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program...**

FROM: helping employers fill specific labour or skills shortages on a short-term basis



TO: helping employers profit from a global supply of cheap, vulnerable and disposable labour for just about any job you can imagine

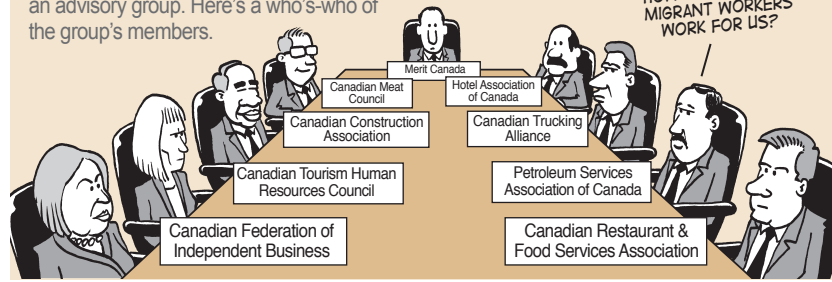


The Conservatives created loopholes allowing employers to get more temporary work permits

Since 2006, the Harper government has quietly made critical changes to the **Temporary Foreign Worker Program**. “Quietly” means they did it largely away from parliamentary oversight—like so many of the other things they do! Here’s some of what they did:

A little help from their friends

To get some advice on how to “improve” the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, the Conservatives put together an advisory group. Here’s a who’s-who of the group’s members.



1 They set the stage by adding one line to the 2007 budget, inviting employers to recruit temporary migrant workers...

“...for any legally recognized occupation from any country.”



2 They have played fast and loose with the amount of time employers are required to advertise job openings. It used to be six weeks. They reduced it to as little as six **days** at one point. Then they increased it to 14 days. Now there is a “guideline” for employers to advertise jobs nationally for only four weeks.



3 They opened special offices in Alberta and British Columbia to fast-track the approval for some employers seeking migrant workers. It was a sort of fast lane for employers who were looking to hire workers in occupations that they called “under pressure,” in other words, facing a shortage of workers. How a shortage was determined was never explained, other than employers claims of shortages.

4 They later introduced an across-the-board fast lane for all employers. Their goal? To process employers’ applications in as little as ten days!

5 For one year they allowed employers to pay 15% less to **ALL** workers doing the “high-skilled” job for which temporary work permits were sought. The discount was 5% for “low-skilled” jobs.



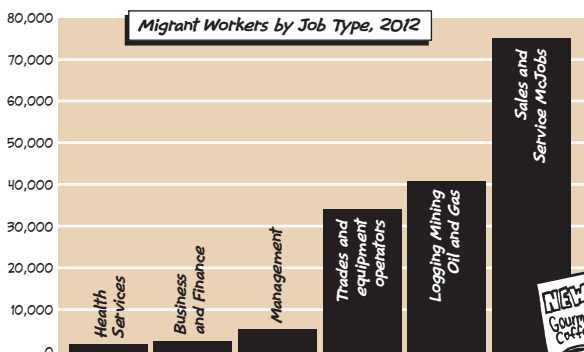
NOTE: This fast track/pay less window for employers was recently closed due to public pressure. But this government is on public record saying the fast track window is only “temporarily suspended.”

And there was a bonus! Until 2013, the application process was **FREE**, which amounted to a \$35 million-per-year subsidy to employers!

Employers applied for migrant workers by the thousands, and the government happily obliged. Access to Information documents reveal that over 70% of applications are approved!



With these changes, the use of migrant workers has skyrocketed. Employers have been given about **half a million** temporary work permits, including 340,000 migrant workers in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program at the end of 2012. And there’s an alarming trend: employers have been able to fill more and more **low-skilled** jobs with migrant workers. This includes jobs in **retail and fast food!** In early 2013, a list of employers that were granted work visas for “high-skilled” temporary workers was made public. The list is 90 pages long and contains thousands of workplaces—and among them are fast food outlets like Tim Hortons, Dairy Queen, Quiznos and A&W.



Harper’s changes allowed for a dramatic increase in the use of migrant workers for **McJobs!**



Rampant abuse of migrant workers

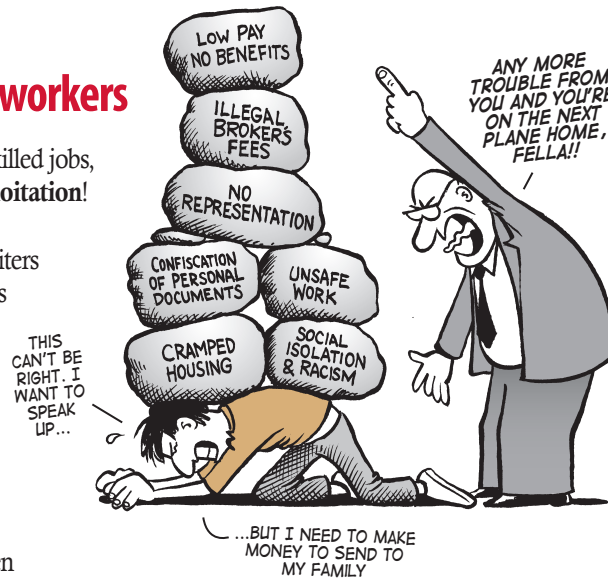
Migrant workers, particularly those in low-skilled jobs, often face multiple forms of abuse and exploitation!

It can start with the labour brokers and recruiters who bring the migrant workers from overseas on behalf of employers. They often lure migrants to Canada with misleading information about the job they'll be doing or false promises of gaining citizenship for themselves and family members.

Brokers then often charge migrants illegal job placement fees, which robs workers of their wages and increases debt. Migrants often have to cope with bosses who don't honour employment contracts—which can sometimes mean failure to pay the workers properly. Employers often force migrants to work in unsafe conditions, or to live in cramped and costly housing.

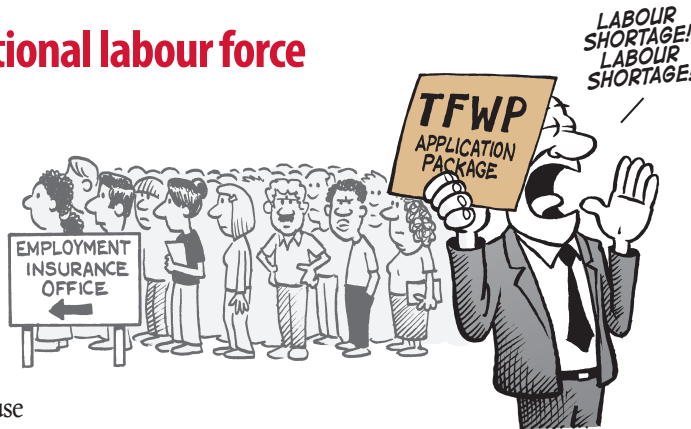
Why don't migrant workers just change jobs if they're being abused? According to the rules, they can't (at least not very easily). This puts them in a vulnerable position—employers can threaten them with deportation if they "misbehave". So the workers tend to remain silent.

➔ *The result is a vulnerable, compliant workforce!*



Problems for the national labour force

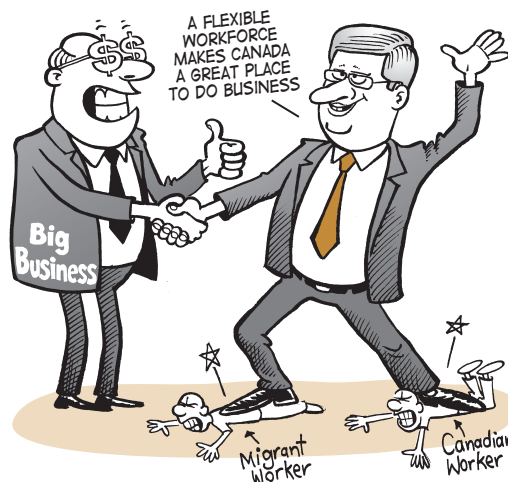
In Canada today, more than a million workers are unemployed and millions more are under-employed. Youth unemployment is off the charts and so is unemployment among aboriginal communities. Yet, employers by the thousands claim they face labour shortages. Clearly, some employers prefer to use easy access to migrant labour rather than investing in job training or paying decent wages and benefits—and the current federal government promotes this behaviour.



➔ *When employers are given the upper hand over workers, they can manipulate wages and working conditions downward.*

A sweet deal and a kick in the teeth

In the end, the Conservative government's expansion of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a sweet deal for employers, and a kick in the teeth to all workers. Employers get off scot-free by avoiding spending on job training or apprenticeships, and by getting a free pass to profit off an easy-to-exploit migrant workforce. Meanwhile, next to nothing is spent on protecting migrant workers' rights!



Tim Hortons—as Canadian as it gets?

In 2013, four migrant workers from two Dawson Creek Tim Hortons outlets filed a complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal. They alleged that the owner was overcharging them for rent in a crowded house, that he had confiscated their passports, and that he had uttered repeated racist comments like "lazy" and "idiot" Mexicans. Meanwhile, in White City, Saskatchewan, six Tim Hortons migrant workers complained of being forced to share three bedrooms and a kitchen without a stove or full-sized refrigerator. They were paying \$500-\$600 each per month in rent.

Tim Hortons claimed these were regrettable but isolated incidents in a company with thousands of franchises. But this is exactly the type of behavior employers feel they can get away with in a program that gives employers all the power. One of the owners in Dawson Creek is alleged to have told his workers he was "the owner of their lives"—and that about sums it up! There are literally thousands of cases of abuse of migrant workers in Canada, and the government is doing little to stop it.

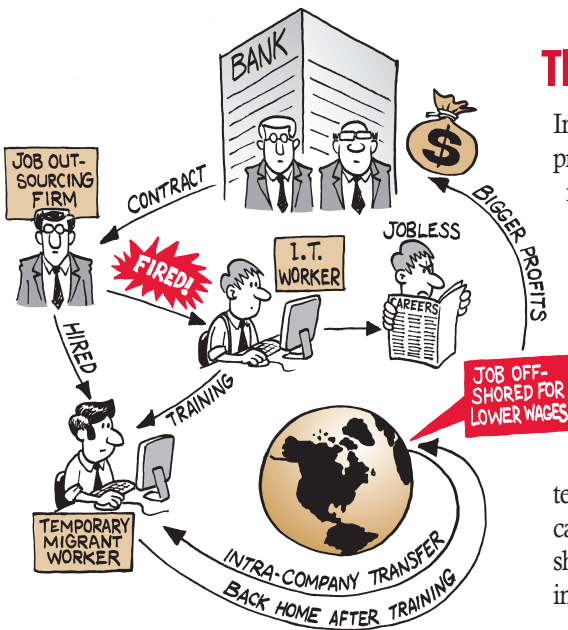
Canadian employer guilty of human trafficking!

There are thousands of Live-in Caregivers working in homes across Canada. These mostly women workers make the challenging decision to leave their own families behind in search of better economic opportunities abroad. They care for our elders and children for years on their hopeful road to Canadian citizenship—and ideally, family re-unification.

However, Canada's Live-in Care Program enables some employers to easily abuse these workers. In July 2013, a BC court found an employer guilty of employing a migrant worker illegally and misrepresenting the situation to immigration officials. This was the first conviction for human trafficking under the Immigration Act.

In international law and Canadian law, human trafficking means the act of recruiting, transporting, holding or receiving people by the use of force, lies, fraud, abuse of power, or payment for the purpose of exploitation. This historic court ruling exposes how flawed the TFWP is and the case represents an important win to protect workers' human rights.





Their agenda exposed!

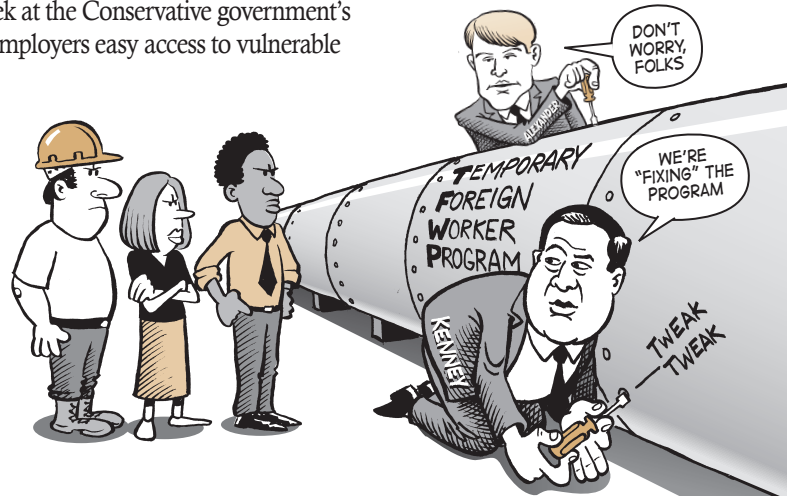
In the spring of 2013, news reports exposed that IT professionals at the Royal Bank of Canada were training migrant workers to do their jobs, only to be later replaced by them. It was a complex arrangement involving a job outsourcing firm and a program for hiring migrant workers called the Intra-company Transfer. The bottom line was simple: workers were losing decent jobs due to an employer profiting from lower wages and job off-shoring. Other workers soon pointed out similar things were happening in their workplaces. From miners, to pilots to healthcare workers, employers were taking advantage of temporary work permits when and where they could. These cases gave the public a peek at the Conservative government's shady scheme to give all employers easy access to vulnerable international labour.

Mighty bank bows to public pressure and worker solidarity!

When news broke about IT workers at the Royal Bank of Canada losing their jobs to off-shoring, there was immediate outrage across the country. Union members organized "greeters clubs" to talk with RBC customers outside bank branches, urging them to re-think where they bank. Unions also threatened to pull out their pension funds. RBC's CEO quickly realized that it was time to change their way of doing business. The bank has since made a public commitment to curtail its practices of off-shoring and worker displacement.

The government was embarrassed by the public outcry and quickly announced changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. But the changes are little more than cosmetic tweaks, aimed at diverting people's attention.

Neither migrant workers nor the national labour force are adequately protected.



Workers demand fundamental change!

For a strong, equitable and just economy, the Canadian government must:

- 1 End the abuse of migrant workers!**
Rigorous monitoring of employers. *AHEM!! NOT ALLOWED!*
- 2 Increase permanent immigration to build a strong citizenry!**
- 3 Invest seriously in job training and apprenticeships!**
- 4 Scale back the TFWP by closing the low-wage pipeline. Establish caps and verify that shortages are genuine.**

ACTION ALERT!

Support the campaign for migrant worker justice!

Contact your MP and insist that the government:

- dramatically scale back the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. This includes: closing the pipeline that allows employers access for low-wage, vulnerable work permits; requiring that applicants provide objective proof of shortages, alongside measurable plans to train and hire from within the country.
- invest seriously in job training and apprenticeships and develop a labour market strategy that puts unemployed and under-employed people back to work with decent wages and working conditions—with special priority on helping racialized workers, newcomers, youth and aboriginal communities.
- return to a policy of permanent immigration, not abusive temporary migration schemes.

Lobby provincial/territorial, municipal and First Nation governments

and ask them to put in place measures that both protect migrant workers and require employers to demonstrate they are hiring locally.

Join with the CLC, your union, labour federations and allies

and support their work organizing migrant workers.

Organize rallies, flash mobs and direct actions

targeting industry associations, labour brokers and employers abusing migrant workers.



Canadian Labour Congress • www.canadianlabour.ca

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