

September 8, 2022

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A2
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Hon. Sean Fraser
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Confederation Building, Suite 110
House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
sean.fraser@parl.gc.ca

Cc: Migrant Rights Network - info@migrantrights.ca

RE: We support Permanent Residence for All

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Fraser,

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers represents over 60,000 workers including workers in processing, delivery and retail counters at Canada Post, and many cleaners, couriers, and other logistics workers at private-sector employers.

There are over 500,000 people, including families and children, living in Canada without any valid immigration permits. Additionally, 1.2 million people are on work, study, or refugee claimant permits; most without any opportunity to remain in Canada permanently. Migrants, including refugees, have always worked here: they raise our kids, care for our parents, pick our food. They often work in some of the most exploitative and insecure jobs in Canada.

Permanent residency is the mechanism through which all other rights are accessed for migrants. Lack of permanent resident status makes it almost impossible for migrants to speak up against substandard working conditions, exploitation, and abuse.

Your government knows that Canadian immigration policies have failed workers and you have taken steps in the right direction. The Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship in December 2021 asked to build on existing pilot programs to further explore ways of regularizing status for undocumented workers who are contributing to Canadian communities, and this year the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion asking the Minister to create a plan to give permanent residency to workers of all skill levels. Up to now, most low-wage workers, so called low-skilled workers have been excluded from such programs

Your government has a tremendous opportunity to do the right thing. Partial or exclusionary programs are not acceptable. It's time to extend permanent residency to the 1.7 migrants, including the 500,000 undocumented migrants.

The new program must be simple and broad with a clear and simple application process, without exclusions or inadmissibility. The Migrant Rights Network has created a set of proposals and principles to guide the development of a regularization program for all immigrants and refugees (see attachment), and CUPW endorse these principles wholeheartedly

The Liberal government has repeatedly committed to liberal values such as upholding values of equality, fighting racism, and welcoming immigrants and refugees. This year, on World Refugee Day Refugees, you said: "Refugees are integral to the fabric of our communities across the country; they start businesses, volunteer to help those who need it, and contribute fully to our local economies. Canada is better for it." Words aren't enough. It's time for action. It's time to build a comprehensive program and status for all migrant workers.

The labour movement is engaged in this matter because all workers, whether they are migrant workers or refugees, deserve fair wages, safe working conditions and job protections. Most migrant workers entering Canada come under temporary permits and are thus denied basic rights and benefits. Many migrants come to Canada as migrant workers tied to an employer which increases vulnerability and limits their ability to speak out about bad work conditions. Most of them are denied the right to a Union.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed both how essential the labour of migrant workers is to our society, and how precarious and vulnerable these workers are. Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, migrant workers have cared for our elderly, staffed our hospitals, cleaned our public spaces, and put food on our tables. All the while, they have been heavily exploited by their employers and, in too many cases, have died due to inadequate care and unsafe working conditions. COVID-19 must be a wake-up call for this government and Canadian society at large that we are only as safe and healthy as our most marginalised workers. Providing permanent residency to all migrants is an essential first step in ensuring that we can respond to future crises in a more just and equitable way.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers and its members stand in solidarity with migrant workers and refugees and the organizations and people that support them, including the Migrant Rights Network, and demand the government provide rights, regularization, and status for all.



Jan Simpson
National President – CUPW-STTP

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