



August 29, 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

RE: We support Permanent Residence for All

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Fraser,

OPSEU/SEFPO represents over 180,000 members throughout the Province of Ontario and stands with all workers who face exploitation and require protection from the government against unscrupulous employers. Low-waged migrant workers are one such group who seek protection from the state.

We support your mandate letter dated December 16, 2021 calling for a “regularization program” for undocumented migrants and expanded pathways to Permanent Residence for temporary foreign workers through the Express Entry system. It is vital that workers of all skill-levels are included in the plan to gain permanent status. As unionists, we find it only fair that if one is able to work, one ought to be able to safely and securely live here.

Canada must choose between (1) a partial, small and exclusionary program that will give rights to a few and deny them to most or (2) equal rights for all by extending permanent residence to 1.7 million migrants, including 500,000 undocumented migrants. At this moment in Canadian history, you can fix an historic injustice by implementing a comprehensive program instead of a partial or exclusionary one.

Fair immigration policy is important to OPSEU/SEFPO and the labour movement. Canadian immigration policy has failed millions of workers. Most migrants to Canada are coming under temporary permits (such as work and study permits) rather than as permanent residents. In 2017, 70% of immigrants came to Canada under these various temporary streams, and were thus denied basic rights and benefits like job protections, healthcare and education. Many migrants come to Canada as migrant workers tied to

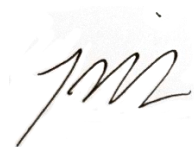
an employer which increases vulnerability and limits their ability to speak out about bad work conditions. Most of them are denied the right to a Union.

When it comes to refugees, Canada does not even rank in the top 50 of refugee-accepting countries. A majority of refugees who claim asylum inside Canada are denied. Many are often threatened with deportation to places where they are assaulted and murdered because of exclusionary laws. Most migrants and refugees, particularly those in low-waged jobs, have no path to permanent residency. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people make the difficult decision to stay in Canada as undocumented migrants, which results in further exclusion and marginalization. A key union principle is that “an injury to one is an injury to all,” and as unionists, OPSEU/SEFPO stands with migrant workers.

By ensuring equal status for 1.7 million migrants, we would be removing a significant barrier to equality. Migrants, including refugees and undocumented migrants, have always worked here — raising our kids, caring for our parents, and picking our food. They often work in some of the most insecure and exploitative jobs in Canada. But these are precisely the parts of our economy that we need to support and expand: nursing, child- and elder-care, farming, and domestic labour.

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 grown our food. 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.

Sincerely,



JP Hornick
President, OPSEU/ SEFPO

Cc: Bert Blundon, President, NUPGE
Migrant Rights Network - info@migrantrights.ca
Peter Thompson, Chair, Coalition of Racialized Workers