



Worker Solidarity Network
519-620 View Street
Lekwungen Territory
Victoria, BC, V8W 1J7

September 19, 2022

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Fraser,

We, at the Worker Solidarity Network (WSN), have endorsed the Migrant Right Network's regularization campaign, the principles of which are attached to this letter as a separate document. We are writing to you to urge you to choose to support the regularization of all undocumented people without exception and grant permanent residence for all migrants, particularly those in low-wage jobs—our domestic care workers, our child-care workers, our neighbours, baristas, farmers, and hotel workers— who drove our economy during the pandemic and will continue to drive it in the climate crisis despite lacking equal rights and often basic protections.

The Worker Solidarity Network consists of non-unionized and precarious workers across B.C. that advocate for our rights and interests as workers while taking collective action to improve labour standards for all. The WSN organizes to distribute accessible know-your-rights education, close the gap in effective labour rights enforcement, support and empower individuals with complaints, and to campaign for long-term improvements. Under our mandate, WSN has been a key player in a variety of provincial and national campaigns, including the Paid Sick Day campaign, the Fight for Fifteen, and as recent as this past month, has influenced British Columbia's provincial Budget Recommendation Report, with the WSN's work explicitly being cited as the reasoning behind certain funding recommendations to provide equitable conditions for workers.

In your December 16, 2021 letter, you asked the Immigration Minister to “build on existing pilot programs to further explore ways of regularizing status for undocumented workers who are contributing to Canadian communities.” In addition, in June 2022, Minister Fraser announced that he is preparing to create a permanent pathway for temporary residents of all skill levels; up to now, most low-wage workers have been excluded.



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In this crucial moment, you have the choice between a partial, small, and exclusionary program that will give rights to a few and deny them to most, or equal rights for all by extending permanent residence to 1.7 million workers, including 500,000 undocumented workers.

It is imperative that you choose the regularization of all undocumented people without exception and permanent residence for all migrants, particularly those in low-wage jobs.

To guide you in the development of a regularization program, we have attached a set of principles crafted by the Migrant Rights Network that we wholeheartedly endorse in this letter. We urge you to follow these proposals that, in brief, call for:

- The development of a simple, broad program
- A clear and simple application process
- No exclusions or inadmissibility
- No detentions or deportations
- A comprehensive and accessible communications strategy

Implementing these proposals will establish the most extensive, accessible, and equitable regularization program that all undocumented people would be able to access, setting a vital precedent.

The Trudeau government has repeatedly committed to liberal values such as upholding values of equality, fighting racism, and welcoming immigrants and refugees. Until today's historic opportunity, the largest regularization program - the Adjustment of Status Program - was developed by Pierre Trudeau's administration in 1973. The current opportunity to regularize all undocumented people would continue building upon this work and the legacy of former Liberal governments.



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The Trudeau government has repeatedly addressed and welcomed migrants and refugees. On January 28, 2017, the Right Honourable Prime Minister Trudeau stated that “those feeling persecution, terror, and war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of faith.” On January 21, 2022. In the Prime Minister’s statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the government reaffirmed its commitment to building a world where everybody has an equal opportunity to succeed, and encouraged all Canadians to “confront racism, discrimination, and xenophobia in all its forms” to “build a safer, fairer, and more inclusive country for everyone.” As recently as World Refugee Day on June 21, 2022 the Statement of the Prime Minister’s office again reaffirmed its commitment to “continuing to provide those in need with a safe place to call home” and explicitly cited the UNHCR’s slogan of “Whoever. Wherever. Everyone has the right to seek safety.” Providing the right to seek safety and upholding the administration’s commitment to building a more inclusive country starts with including and welcoming the countless undocumented people already within Canada. The creation of a comprehensive program that would see the regularization of all undocumented people in Canada facing unequal conditions and discrimination would be the most concrete step the administration could take to uphold its commitment.

Your government has an historic opportunity to continue its commitment to human rights, refugees, migrants, and its liberal values by fixing a historic problem and implementing a comprehensive program instead of a partial or exclusionary one. Regularization is already a key feature in several countries, and is a feature of immigration policy in the European Union. Between 1996 and 2008, an estimated 5.5 to 6 million people were regularized in Europe due to regularization programs implemented in 24 out of 27 EU member states; with the 2002 Italian program and 2005 Spanish program regularizing 634,000 and 578,375 people respectively. By paving the way for the regularization of all undocumented people in Canada, the Trudeau government would not only be following in the lead of existent policies from the European Union; but would be positioning itself as a world leader on equality, anti-racism, and protecting refugees and immigrants. We urge you to rise up to this historical moment and uphold the values guiding your administration.



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Migrants are part of our communities, part of our workplaces, and have always worked here. In our province of British Columbia, migrant workers raise our children, look after our parents, pick our fruit, work our hotels, and oftentimes work in horrendously exploitative conditions in some of the most insecure and exploitative jobs in Canada. We have seen workers brought in as temporary foreign workers, and deported before they receive pay. We have seen them unable to access basic rights, health care, proper working conditions, with most being denied the right to a union. We know this is a national problem. Migrants come to Canada and to BC as migrant workers tied to an employer, and this increases their vulnerability and limits their ability to speak out on bad work conditions. This is not a small portion of workers either: in 2017, 70% of immigrants came to Canada under various temporary streams, and were thus denied basic rights and benefits like job protections, healthcare and education.

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.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this crisis. The Honourable Minister Sean Fraser began his mandate as Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship in the shadow of the pandemic and the Prime Minister's statement welcoming him made clear that he would "prioritize ongoing work to strengthen Canada's immigration and refugee system," "bring more newcomers to all regions of Canada to support Canada's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic," and "act with urgency to provide resettlement opportunities for people under threat."



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These newcomers are already here. They are already the workers driving our economy. They are our domestic care workers, our child-care workers, our neighbours, baristas, farmers, and hotel workers. They are people under threat in their homelands, and they have driven our economy during the enduring pandemic.

Migrants are already benefiting Canada by their presence as proven by the pandemic and a comprehensive regularization program would only ensure equal rights for these workers. It would ensure that all in this country receive equal treatment, and that there are not two different classes of workers—one with rights and one without.

The pandemic revealed how essential the labour of these workers are, but also how vulnerable and precarious their situations 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.

With the COVID-19 pandemic giving way to Canada beginning to reckon with the climate crisis, migrant workers will again be on the frontlines. Migrants have been the ones working in fields and orchards during heat waves, facing floods and fires, and are at the forefront of the climate emergency. As Canada grapples with what a just transition looks like, the experiences of migrant workers facing the harshest conditions needs to be acknowledged and these workers regularized to attain the protections they need.



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For these reasons, we urge you, Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Honorable Minister Sean Fraser, to act on this historical moment. Choose to support the regularization of all undocumented people without exception and permanent residence for all migrants, particularly those in low-waged jobs, this coming month. Choose to create a thorough, comprehensive, accessible, and equitable regularization program that would give equal rights to all 1.7 million migrants in this country, including 500,000 migrant workers. Ensure status for all!

Respectfully,

The Worker Solidarity Network