

The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

In the coming weeks, the Government of Canada will consider changes to the system of closed work permits for temporary foreign workers - permits that "tie" workers to a single employer. These reforms need to be far-reaching, not band-aid solutions to an exploitative and abusive system. As members of the academic community, many of us teach and/or conduct research on issues related to migration justice; we join migrant workers in their condemnation of the current system and their call for open work permits and pathways to permanent residency.

In his visit to Canada in September, the UN Rapporteur [condemned](#) our closed work permit system for making migrant workers vulnerable to contemporary forms of slavery. The widespread exploitation and mistreatment experienced by migrant workers in Canada's temporary foreign workers programs has been extensively documented. Human rights tribunals, labour boards, courts, parliamentary committees, and extensive academic research have all recognized that **legal restrictions like closed work permits contribute significantly to workers' vulnerability and prevent them from asserting their rights.**

Successive Canadian governments continue to refuse to address the root of the problem. Superficial reforms, such as the Open Work Permit for Vulnerable Workers Program, are deliberately difficult to access and have failed to protect migrant workers from systemic abuse.

In November, a [petition](#) calling on the Government of Canada to eliminate closed work permits was presented to the House of Commons by Jenny Kwan, MP. This petition and the UN Rapporteur's harsh criticisms of Canada's temporary foreign worker program prompted Immigration Minister Marc Miller to review the closed work permit system. However, **the reforms he has hinted at — merely replacing closed permits with sector-specific or regional-restricted permits — are not acceptable alternatives.** Any permit that ties the worker to a specific employer or group of employers places them in a condition of servitude. The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, is, in essence, a sectoral work permit, and it is plagued with abuse and exploitation.

At a recent worker-led event in Edmonton, migrant workers spoke loud and clear: "The closed work permit system set us up for exploitation the moment we sign the work contract. It restricts our freedom of movement and takes away our freedom of choice. We are reclaiming our dignity and calling on the government for unconditional open work permits with realistic and straightforward pathways to permanent residency." The [call for open work permits](#) is widely endorsed by migrant justice organizations across Canada and migrant workers themselves.

It is time for Parliament to act decisively and adopt **just, transformative, and lasting solutions**.

We, the undersigned, therefore, request the adoption of the following legislative changes:

1. **Replace closed work permits with unconditional open work permits.**
2. **Open barrier-free pathways to permanent residency for all migrant workers (regardless of wage level or occupation).**

Sincerely,

Monique Deveaux, Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Guelph
Min Sook Lee, Associate Professor, OCAD University
Candace Johnson, Professor, University of Guelph
Kristin Lozanski, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, King's University
College at Western University
Stefan Dolgert, Associate Professor, Brock University
Chris Little, PhD Candidate, Department of Politics, York University
Ethel Tungohan, Associate Professor, York University
Jill Hanley, Full Professor, McGill School of Social Work
Vasanthi Venkatesh, Associate Professor, University of Windsor, Law Faculty
Heryka Miranda, Educator, Brock University and McMaster University
Luin Goldring, Professor of Sociology, York University
Laura Macdonald, Professor, Political Science, Carleton University
Eugénie Dépatie-Pelletier, Professeure associée, Université Laval
Edward Dunsworth, Assistant Professor of History, McGill University
Tanya Basok, Professor, University of Windsor
Stephanie Mayell, PhD Candidate, University of Toronto
Anne-Emanuelle Birn, Professor of Global Development Studies, University of
Toronto
Tuulia Law, Assistant Professor, York University
Renee Sylvain, Associate Professor, University of Guelph
Susan Spearey, Associate Professor, Brock University
Janet McLaughlin, Associate Professor, Health Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University
Saara Liinamaa, University of Guelph
Leah Levac, Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Critical
Community Engagement and Public Policy, University of Guelph
Lori Hanson, Professor Emeritus, University of Saskatchewan
Gavin Smith, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto
Ben Brisbois, Adjunct Professor, University of Northern British Columbia
Ryan Isakson, Associate Professor of Global Development Studies, University of
Toronto
Deborah Cowen, Professor, University of Toronto
Kate Korycki, Assistant Professor, Western University

Fidan Elcioglu, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto
Isabelle Cochelin, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Atiqa Hachimi, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Donald Cole, Emeritus Professor, University of Toronto
Daniel Scott Tysdal, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of English,
UTSC
Rachel Goffe, Assistant Professor, Dept of Geography, University of Toronto
Sarah Wakefield, Professor, University of Toronto
Miguel Torrens, Academic librarian and researcher, University of Toronto
Suzanne Sicchia, Associate Professor Teaching, University of Toronto
Kari Dehli, Professor Emerita, University of Toronto
Kiran Mirchandani, Professor, University of Toronto
Gail Super, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Eva-Lynn Jagoe, Professor, Spanish and Portuguese, University of Toronto
Victor Li, Associate Professor (Emeritus), University of Toronto
E. Natalie Rothman, Professor of History, University of Toronto
Richard Roman, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto
Peter Fitting, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto
Martin Klein, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto
Barbara Evans, York University
Natalie Oswin, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Ken MacDonald, Professor, University of Toronto
Nicholas Sammond, Professor, University of Toronto
Danny Heap, Associate Professor, Emeritus, University of Toronto
Thy Phu, University of Toronto
Jesook Song, University of Toronto
John P. Portelli, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto
Luisa Farah Schwartzman, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Maya Harakawa, University of Toronto
Paul Hamel, Professor, University of Toronto
James Deutsch, Assistant Professor, Psychiatry, University of Toronto
Andrea A. Cortinois, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
Dina Georgis, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Shahzad Mojab, Professor, University of Toronto
Jayeeta Sharma, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Abigail Bakan, Professor, University of Toronto
Daniel Bender, Professor, University of Toronto
Ruth Marshall, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Arsalan Kahnemuyipour, Professor, University of Toronto
Ken Kawashima, Associate professor, University of Toronto
Rosa Sarabia, Professor Emerita, University of Toronto
Adrienne Chambon, Professor Emerita, University of Toronto
Sue Ruddick, Professor Emerita, University of Toronto
Kathy Bickmore, Professor, University of Toronto

Zoë H Wool, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
Scott Prudham, Professor, University of Toronto
Stephen Rockel, University of Toronto
Uzoma, Associate Professor (Retired), University of Toronto
Michelle Buckley, Associate Professor, University of Toronto
Jason Foster, Associate Professor, Athabasca University
Bob Barnetson, Professor, Athabasca University
Mylène Coderre, University of Ottawa
Peter Vandergeest, Professor Emeritus, York University
C. Susana Caxaj, Associate Professor, Western University
Krizia Paylago, University of Toronto