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Releases

Fundamental flaws of the TFW program remain unaddressed

VANCOUVER – Federal government's changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) miss the mark, and do nothing to address the fundamental flaws of a program that depresses wages and leaves workers vulnerable.

"These changes are an admission that the TFWP that the Conservative government created, was out of control. Yet these changes do very little to address the fundamental flaws of the program," said Jim Sinclair, President of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

"There are two groups of workers who did not win today. The Temporary Foreign Workers who are still held hostage to one employer and have no rights and the more than one million unemployed in Canada who cannot find work to feed their families."

Changes announced to the TFWP today lift the moratorium on low-wage sectors, opens the door for all sectors to apply to the program, and ignores the question of permanent citizenship for people who come to work and live in Canada.

"Jason Kenney is more interested in finding ways to keep the stream of vulnerable workers flowing than to protect the jobs of Canadians or the rights of the Temporary Foreign Workers," said Sinclair. "This just makes it official that employers can continue to bring indentured workers to Canada, exploit

them and if they speak up --- they can be deported."

There has been a dramatic shift in how the TFWP has been used by employers. In 2005, the top five occupations that were brought in under the TFW/LMO program (excluding live-in care givers) were: musicians and singers; actors and comedians; producers, directors and related occupations; specialist physicians; other technical occupations in motion pictures and broadcasting.

By 2008, the top five had shifted: food counter attendants and kitchen helpers; cooks; construction trades helpers and labourers; light duty cleaners; musicians and singers. Food and beverage workers were number six.

The number of TFWs is also outpacing immigration to BC. The total number of TFWs working in BC grew from 22,204 in 2003 to 74,219 in 2012. In those same years, the number of permanent residents entering the province remained at approximately 36,000 per year.

"Our solutions are simple and supported by Canadians. Grant immediate access to the immigration stream for the all current Temporary Foreign Workers. Shut down the low-wage categories immediately, and re-open the immigration system so people can come to work and live in this country, and have the same rights and protections of all workers."