March 22, 2013 |

Releases

Harper Government Recommits to Temporary Foreign Workers as a Pool of Cheap Labour, Undercuts Canadian Wages

Vancouver, BC—Yesterday's federal budget promised new language restrictions for employers, but did little to stop employers from using Temporary Foreign Workers as a cheap pool of labour with fewer rights than Canadians, said B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair.

While Budget 2013 offers vague promises about changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker program, it maintains the employer's ability to pay Temporary Foreign Workers up to 15 percent less than Canadian Workers. "When the Harper government is actively promoting a scheme to allow employers to pay foreign workers less than Canadians, is it any wonder employers are using the program as a first resort and not a last resort," said Sinclair.

Sinclair noted that one change came in direct response to the labour movement's challenge of Temporary Foreign Worker permits issued to HD Mining. He said the federal government is promising to introduce restrictions about foreign language requirements used by employers to avoid hiring Canadian workers.

"Every week, we receive more information about both the exploitation of Temporary Foreign Workers, and at the same time Canadians being displaced from their jobs, so employers can hire cheaper labour," Sinclair said. "We need a moratorium on the Temporary Foreign Worker program and the

Harper government should conduct a full review to ensure the program cannot be abused by employers."

Sinclair also raised concerns that 95 Labour Market Opinions and resulting permits have been issued to Canadian Dehua to operate the Gething mine near Hudson's Hope, BC. "If the Harper government is serious about ensuring the Temporary Foreign Worker is not abused by employers they must launch an immediate investigation into the permits issued to Canadian Dehua," Sinclair stated. "Unions should not have to rely on the courts to deliver the transparency the federal government now promises."

"Every person coming to our country to work deserves the same workplace rights and protections as Canadians, that means reinvesting in our immigration programs, not relying on temporary workers," added Sinclair. "I'm disappointed the Harper government's budget does nothing on this front."

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