



720 Spadina Avenue, Suite 223,  
Toronto, ON M5S 2T9  
E: [info@migrantworkersalliance.org](mailto:info@migrantworkersalliance.org)  
T: 1-855-567-4722  
[www.migrantworkersalliance.org](http://www.migrantworkersalliance.org)

The Honourable Marco Mendicino  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
365 Laurier Ave W  
Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1  
[IRCC.Minister-Ministre.IRCC@cic.gc.ca](mailto:IRCC.Minister-Ministre.IRCC@cic.gc.ca)

April 29, 2020

Honourable Minister Mendocino,

### **RE: Migrants and Social Assistance**

As you are aware, during this time of crisis due to COVID-19, unemployment has soared in Canada. Many of our organizations' members or clients have experienced unemployment and many are without status. In most cases this makes them unable to receive employment insurance (and possibly the Canada Emergency Response Benefit as well). This has put many of our people in a difficult situation: they have to choose whether to receive social assistance they need, given the possible repercussions on their immigration status.

Immigration ramifications can occur a number of ways:

- a foreign national can be found inadmissible under section 39 of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)*, leading to removal and a potential bar from returning for a year;
- a foreign national pursuing an application for permanent residency based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds based on section 25 (1) of the *IRPA* can have their application denied due to collecting social assistance;
- a Canadian citizen or permanent resident cannot sponsor family members as per 133 (1) k of the regulations; and
- if a Canadian citizen or permanent resident sponsors a person, they will be required to repay the province or territory if the sponsored person collects social assistance during the period of the sponsorship undertaking as per 133 (1) j of the regulations.



Given the enormity of the internationally declared pandemic, we are writing to ask that these sanctions be lifted during the time of this crisis, that receipt of social assistance during this period not be used against people in the future, and furthermore that the lifting of these sanctions be publicized so that our members and others can freely access the fund needed to survive this crisis.

We ask this to promote public health and to ensure that all migrants are able to obtain social assistance without future repercussions so that they have the means to self-isolate and maintain physical distancing.

As always we also urge a regularization program for people without status.

This request is on behalf of members of Migrant Workers Alliance for Change as well as the undersigned organizations. Please do not hesitate to contact Syed Hussan, Executive Director, Migrant Workers Alliance for Change at [hussan@migrantworkersalliance.org](mailto:hussan@migrantworkersalliance.org) to discuss the matter further.

Sincerely,

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change\*  
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and  
Community Services  
Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic  
Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention  
Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture  
Caregivers' Action Centre  
Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic  
Community Legal Services of Ottawa  
Council of Agencies Serving South  
Asians (CASSA)  
Don Valley Community Legal Services  
Downsview Community Legal Services  
Fight for \$15 and Fairness  
Hamilton Community Legal Clinic  
Health Providers Against Poverty

HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)  
Income Security Advocacy Centre  
Japanese Canadians for Social Justice  
Law Union of Ontario  
Manitoulin Legal Clinic  
Margaret's Housing and community  
support services  
Mississauga Community Legal Services  
Neighbourhood Legal Services  
No One Is Illegal - Toronto  
Northumberland Community Legal  
Centre  
OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies  
Serving Immigrants  
OHIP for All  
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty



Parkdale Queen West Community  
Health Centre  
Punjabi Community Health Services  
Sanctuary Students Solidarity and  
Support Collective  
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario  
Sudbury Community Legal Clinic

TAIBU Community Health Centre  
The Legal Clinic  
Willowdale Community Legal Services  
Workers' Action Centre  
YWCA Canada

*The Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC) includes individuals as well as Asian Community Aids Services, Butterfly (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support), Caregiver Connections Education and Support Organization, Caregivers Action Centre, Chinese Canadian National Council – Toronto, Durham Region Migrant Solidarity Network, FCJ Refugee House, GABRIELA Ontario, IAVGO Community Legal Clinic, Income Security Advocacy Centre, Migrante Ontario, No One Is Illegal – Toronto, Northumberland Community Legal Centre, OCASI – Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, OHIP For All, PCLS Community Legal Clinic, SALCO Community Legal Clinic, Students Against Migrant Exploitation, UFCW, UNIFOR, Workers' Action Centre and Workers United.*