



Migrant Workers  
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## Exploitation Scheme Targeting Certain International Students **Presentation to Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration** **June 21, 2023**

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today on behalf of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change. We are a membership-based organization of tens of thousands of migrant farmworkers, careworkers, study permit holders, post-graduate work permit holders, refugees and undocumented people. I coordinate Migrant Students United - the sector of our work that organizes and supports current and former international students with membership in every province and territory.

As of December 2022, there are 807,260 study permit holders and 286,245 post-graduate work permit holders in the country. Of the 1.7 million migrant and undocumented people in Canada, current and former international students are the largest group of non-permanent residents. Like other migrants, they live and work in Canada, mostly for low-wages, and then are forced to leave or become undocumented. They are, in other words, migrant workers.

Immigration rules that deny permanent resident status to the majority of people arriving in Canada are fundamentally responsible for the exploitation and exclusion of migrant students. We reiterate our call for permanent resident status for all migrants, including working class migrants arriving today on study permits. I can speak more to that in the question and answers section, but today I want to focus my remarks on recruitment.

We have been organizing with the students tricked by education recruiters, including Lovepreet and Balbir, and we echo their recommendations to waive inadmissibility for all impacted students who are deemed inadmissible or have admissibility hearings underway. I urge you to give immediate directions to the task force via Minister Fraser to implement a fair process that seeks to support students by allowing all those who are impacted to self-identify and receive temporary



resident permits, reversing the onus, and ensuring there is a right of appeal for those considered “complicit”.

Based on the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change’s decades of experience creating regulations regarding recruiters of temporary foreign workers, we propose the creation of an International Students Recruiter Regulatory Regime in consultation with migrant-led organizations. Such a regulatory regime must be based on the following initial principles:

1. First, the regulatory mechanism must be designed with the aim of protecting and supporting migrant students, instead of keeping out students whose agents are engaging in illegal and unscrupulous practices;
2. Second, all recruiters of international students must be registered with the federal government and their names must be publicly available;
3. Third, colleges and universities must only work with registered recruiters. Those caught not doing so must face strict penalties.
4. Fourth, there must be joint and several liability between the educational institutions and recruiters. That is, if a student is exploited by a recruiter even in India or another sending country, the college and university in Canada must be held financially responsible;
5. Fifth, a complaints system must be created which includes whistleblower protections, including permanent resident status for international students who come forward with complaints about unfair recruitment practices. Many of the students caught up by Brijesh Mishra, Atul Mahajan, Gurbaj Gill and other recruiters would come forward if they know they will not be penalized.

For the the recruiter regulatory regime system to work, Canada must also take two other steps.

First, college and university education accreditation processes must be taken up by the federal government. Many fly-by-night private colleges make up the bulk of the institutions where students are facing recruiter abuse. The federal government is aware of the sub-standard nature of these institutions, because graduates are not



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issued a post-graduate work permit. Such schools, many of which are basically predatory financial institutions, must be weeded out.

Second, you must reject proposals for self-regulation by colleges and universities. Guidelines and principles created by post-secondary institutions are non-enforceable and do not provide a mechanism of enforcement to migrants.

Many migrant students have become undocumented, and are among the half a million people in the country without immigration status. I want to take this opportunity to remind you that 18 months ago, in December 2021, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised to create a regularization program for undocumented people, and permanent resident status for migrant students and workers. In two days when Parliament rises, the third consecutive legislative session since that promise was made will end. We do not need further studies or investigations, I urge you to call the Prime Minister and tell him to do the right thing and immediately create an uncapped regularization program that grants permanent status to all undocumented people, without exclusion.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

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