KAIROS and Migrant Workers
Issues in Canada

Global Ecumenical Network on Migration
November 4 – 11, 2012
Manila, Philippines

Alfredo Barahona
Program Coordinator
Migrant and Indigenous Rights
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Canadians less enthusiastic about immigrants, survey finds

THE CANADIAN PRESS  OCTOBER 30, 2012

MORE ON THIS STORY
- Immigration 101: Growing number of foreign students offers benefits, risks for schools and Canada
- Language census: Filipino immigrants fuel
The other side of the story...

"The rate of unemployment and underemployment amongst immigrants is too high, ... We're bringing a lot of newcomers here only to face unemployment or underemployment in an economy with skills shortages which doesn't make much sense." Immigration Minister Jason Kenney.

Since 2008, the Conservatives have carried out major reforms to immigration policy, eradicating backlogs, overhauling the federal skilled worker program and changing the refugee system, among others.

The other side of the story...

"The government must promote positive newcomer contributions and avoid discourse that feeds misconceptions and prejudice against immigrants and refugees."

Canadian Council for Refugees

The Canadian Press October 30, 2012
Ottawa makes more room in immigration quota for fast-growing class

STEVEN CHASE
OTTAWA — The Globe and Mail
Published Tuesday, Oct. 30 2012, 10:00 PM EDT
Last updated Wednesday, Oct. 31 2012, 2:51 PM EDT

Canada will hold immigration levels steady for the seventh year in a row in 2013, but will make more room within its quota for what’s quickly become its fastest-growing category of newcomers.

The Canadian Experience Class, launched only a few years ago, represents the future of Canada’s immigration system under the Harper government – where Ottawa places a hard-nosed emphasis on attracting the best and brightest skilled workers.

MORE RELATED TO THIS STORY

- BORDER Illegal migrants breaching Quebec-Vermont border crossing
The Canadian Experience Class, launched only a few years ago, represents the future of Canada’s immigration system under the Harper government – where Ottawa places a hard-nosed emphasis on attracting the best and brightest skilled workers.

Canada plans to admit from 240,000 to 265,000 new permanent residents in 2013 – the same annual target range it’s set for immigration since 2007.

The Globe and Mail - Published Tuesday, Oct. 30 2012
Kenney set to fast-track foreign students for immigration

Immigration minister wants qualified newcomers to integrate quickly


Immigration Minister Jason Kenney announced Wednesday that he wants to fast-track foreign students currently studying in Canada to permanent residence once they graduate.
Flanked by young foreign students from Carleton and the University of Ottawa, and fronted by a large sign that said "Faster immigration," Kenney said he is expanding the number of admissions under the Canadian Experience Class,

which aims to recruit and retain international students who have studied and graduated in Canada as well as temporary foreign workers who speak one of Canada's official languages and already have Canadian work experience.

Up to 10,000 permanent residents will be accepted next year in the Canada Experience Class, up from 7,000 in 2012 and 2,500 in 2009.
I certainly don't mind immigration, I just wish that immigration Canada was a little more picky about who they let in.

Ideally it would restrict immigration only to people who actually have something to offer this country, and want to come here to become "Canadian",

and weed out those who simply come here to take advantage of our welfare and healthcare systems which seems to happen an awful lot.
More than 250,000 migrant workers come to Canada every year.

In 2011 the number increased to over 300,000.
There are no appropriate systems in place to monitor the working and living conditions of these workers.

The health and safety of these workers are amongst many concerns that must be addressed.
In February, 10 migrant workers travelling in a 15 passenger vehicle died in a horrific traffic accident in Ontario.

The Canadian driver of the truck they collided with also died.
Three workers survived the accident.

Having a “temporary” migration status is a huge barrier to accessing support services such as long term disability, health coverage and workers compensation.
In July community, church, labour, human rights defenders and advocates gathered at the site of the accident to:

Celebrate the lives of those who died

Call on federal and provincial governments to ensure the safety of migrant workers by changing and enforcing policies and legislation.
More than 20,000 agricultural migrants workers come to Ontario every year.
One of the most contested issues is allowing employers to pay temporary foreign workers up to 15% than the average wage.
“Canada’s laws don’t support wage discrimination based on where you come from. Many people recognize the majority of migrant workers are people of colour and oppose wage discrimination based on race.”

Yasmeen Khan, with MIGRANTE Canada

“Rather than further skewing Canada’s Temporary Foreign Worker Program to unfairly serve employers’ interests, what is needed are stronger compliance, monitoring and enforcement measures to protect migrant workers’ rights.”

Naveen Mehta, General Counsel and Director of Human Rights, Equity and Diversity with the United Food and Commercial Workers
A KAIROS Op-Ed was published July 17, 2012

KAIROS in solidarity with migrant workers is opposed to the changes and the way they were introduced.

Implement effective systems to monitor and ensure that labour and human rights of migrant workers are respected.

Establish a path to permanent residence and citizenship for all workers.

Ratify the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
This September, 2012 report offers a number of recommendations to improve the working and living conditions of migrant workers across Canada.

The number of temporary foreign workers in Canada has more than tripled in the past decade.

Low-wage migrant workers are brought into Canada on terms and conditions that leave them open to exploitation and that make it difficult to enforce their basic human rights.

The Metcalf foundation argues that these migrant workers are frequently underpaid, overworked, and denied fundamental rights, including rights to decent housing, health care and safe working conditions.

“Since migrant workers don’t enjoy the same legal status and protections as permanent residents, they are at higher risk of abuse by employers who take advantage of their vulnerability,” says the report’s author Fay Faraday, Metcalf Innovation Fellow, and respected constitutional, labour, and human rights lawyer.

Maytree Foundation Report, released October 4, 2012

Over the past four years the Canadian Government has introduced sweeping changes to Canada’s immigration policies.

There is a real short term focus to use immigration policy for immediate labour market purposes as opposed to for nation building.
There are 600,000 Philippine migrant workers in Canada
KAIROS met with Jose Sicajau of the Guatemalan Association United for Our Rights. Jose was barred from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program after supporting a co-worker he witnessed being verbally and physically abused.

Jose noted that the TFWP is being used to justify exclusion and discrimination. The Guatemalan Association United for Our Rights is advocating for the International Convention to Protect the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
Our God Is
UNDOCUMENTED

Biblical Activist Ched Myers
In Dialogue with
Migrant Activist Maru Maesa

Maru and the gathered community will highlight current migrant and refugee issues in the Canadian context. Ched will engage these issues from his book, Our God is Undocumented, co-written with Matthew Colwell.

Wednesday, October 24, 2012
6:30 Gathering
7:00-9:00 Program

Church of the Holy Trinity
Trinity Square (behind the Eaton Centre)
Toronto
Cost: $10 or pay what you can.
Contact: socialjusticeatht@gmail.com
The 2012 resource, is inspired by Mary and Joseph’s search for shelter and based on Las Posadas, a Central American and Mexican tradition in which actors playing Mary and Joseph walk through town searching for shelter.

Today, that search for shelter is a reality for many in our world, whether the shelter people seek is fair wages, land rights, or clean water.

A justice focus for each Sunday:

1 - Climate justice;
2 - Women of Courage;
3 - Migrant justice;
4 - Peace in Bethlehem
2013 -2015

Continue education, advocacy and networking work locally, regionally and internationally

Increase the links and solidarity between migrant communities and Indigenous peoples

Increase solidarity and cooperation among women human rights defenders in Canada and the global south and migrant women in Canada

Area of Focus

1. Education
2. Advocacy
3. Networking
Churches Witnessing with Migrants

To create space where churches and migrants discuss issues of mission, justice, public witness and the impact of temporary migration on both the host and migrant workers communities.

KAIROS will continue working to highlight national and international Migrant Justice issues within member churches and the Canadian public.