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Militant Canada-Wide Actions in Defence of Migrant Rights
Permanent Status for All Now!



Montreal, September 20, 2020

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Militant Canada-Wide Actions in Defence of Migrant Rights
Permanent Status for All Now!

Actions were held across Canada on September 18, 19 and 20 to press the demand for Status For All! There were marches, rallies, pickets (in front of the constituency offices of the Prime Minister in Montreal and the Minister of Immigration in Toronto, as well as other MPs), online rallies and banner drops in many cities, including St. John's, Halifax, Charlottetown, Fredericton, Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, St. Catharines, Sudbury, Winnipeg, Kelowna and Vancouver.



Picket outside the Toronto constituency office of the Minister of Immigration Marco Mendicino, September 20, 2020.

These actions, along with an open letter issued by the Migrant Rights Network and supported by more than 300 organizations, came just ahead of the reconvening of Parliament on September 23. *Status for All!* means that the federal government must put an end to categorizing and discriminating against people seeking to establish status in Canada. No One Is Illegal. Status is necessary for one and all -- migrant workers, undocumented workers, refugee claimants and international students -- to access health care and education, for family reunification, to ensure basic protections and services.



Migrant workers are essential workers, part of the Canadian working class. They are the mainstay in some sectors including agriculture, food processing, seniors' care and child care, the hospitality industry, academic research, etc., yet a myriad of barriers are erected to block them from achieving permanent resident status and citizenship. It is a matter of principle that if people are good enough to work or to study in Canada they are good enough to have full status.

The ruling circles, their political representatives, mass media and others talk a lot about "building back better" from the pandemic and how the changing international situation requires Canada to champion human rights. The image presented is laughable. Canada lectures Venezuela, China and others about "human rights abuses," interferes in the internal affairs of others, supports dictatorial regimes like that of Duterte in the Philippines, arms the Saudi regime to suppress its own people and wage war on Yemen, while the Indigenous peoples, temporary foreign workers and immigrants, refugees and other sections of the working class are denied basic rights.

Holding governments to account is an issue for all Canadians. First and foremost, it means using one's own voice and taking a stand in defence of the rights of all. *Status for All!* is one such demand. Accountability begins at home!

(Photos: WF, Migrant Rights Network)



Statement of Migrant Rights Network

This past weekend, just days before politicians return to Parliament, a single message echoed from St. John's to Vancouver and Montreal to Sudbury; from migrant workers, refugees, undocumented people, international students and allies: we demand full and permanent immigration status for all now.



This Wednesday [September 23], the Trudeau government will announce its priorities and its plan for the new session of Parliament. Opposition parties will have to decide where they stand and who they are willing to fight for. We have no time to lose. We need you to help us get louder!

Take action by calling on PM Trudeau to ensure *Status for All*.

We have seen how the economic and social crisis that came to a head with COVID-19 has forced

millions into deeper poverty and economic exploitation, while leaving the richest few unscathed.

There can be no recovery without undoing the economic, political, and social systems that produced these inequalities. And that means a full overhaul of an immigration system that has tipped the scales against racialized migrants for so long. A fair society, a just society, means full immigration status now.

But no matter what happens this week, we will keep organizing for justice. Each of us has a role to play. We must bring more people into the movement because it is only together that we will win.

(September 21, 2020. Photo: Decent Work and Health)



Review of Actions in Brief

Vancouver and Kelowna



Vancouver, September 18, 2020

On Friday, September 18, organizations of migrant workers and their supporters in Vancouver and Kelowna carried out actions calling for "Full and Permanent Immigration Status For All" as part of

the cross Canada campaign, taking a bold stand in defence of the rights of all.

Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA) dropped banners over the railings of the Highway 97 pedestrian overpass in Kelowna during rush hour on September 18.

Spokesperson Robyn Bunn told iNFOnews "All temporary foreign workers deserve status upon arrival [in Canada] in recognition that they are not temporary and are not foreign... temporary status prevents them from accessing their rights and benefits and also is part of the reason conditions on farms are, sometimes, exploitive and abusive because they can be seen as temporary and expendable."



Kelowna banner drop, September 18, 2020 in preparation for Day of Action.

RAMA works extensively with migrant farm workers who are brought to Canada through a program that provides them visas that only allow them to stay a maximum of eight months in Canada and only work for one employer. To call them "temporary" when many have worked in the Okanagan for up to 20 years, is to misrepresent their contribution and significance to the agricultural sector. Bunn also made the point that one cannot really call them "foreign" because many live and work in Canada longer each year than they do in their home countries. Most of the migrant agricultural workers in British Columbia come from Mexico.

A fraction of the 4,500 migrant farm workers who come to BC annually get sponsored for citizenship. The rest are sent home. If they were given permanent immigration status Bunn says this "would mean visas don't have an end date. It means they are treated as permanent residents in all senses, meaning they get health care, they get access to benefits and all those kinds of things that permanent residents get. They can bring their families and they can become part of our community, if they choose to do that."

In Vancouver, on September 18, a banner calling for "Full Immigration Status for All" was displayed at the Broadway-City Hall SkyTrain Station at 7:30 am to meet morning commuters. Copies of *Workers' Forum* articles demanding permanent status for all and the Open Letter to the Federal Government from Migrant Rights Network were distributed.



Vancouver, September 18, 2020

At another busy traffic location near the Venables viaduct and Main Street, Sanctuary Health held up a huge banner supported by eight people greeting the morning commuters, many of whom honked their horns in support.

This was a vigorous preparation for the September 20 national day of action whose focus once again was that Canada must uphold the rights of all migrants to Canada and grant status immediately to the 1.6 million people living here without permanent resident status. Permanent resident status must be recognized so that all migrants have the basis for a dignified and secure life. As the call out for the previous cross Canada day of action said:

"For too long, those of us without permanent resident status have been unable to get universal services or speak back against bad bosses and power structures. COVID-19 has exacerbated our crisis. We have lost lives and livelihoods. We have been excluded from receiving the support we need. We need a single-tier society where everyone in the country has the same rights and opportunities, and that means full and permanent immigration status for all. No more racism, no more deaths, no more exploitation, Status Now!"

Sudbury



St. Catharines





Hamilton



Participants in Hamilton reiterate their demand for "a single-tier immigration system, where everyone in the country has the same rights. All migrants, refugees and undocumented people in the country must be regularized and given full immigration status now without exception. All migrants arriving in the future must do so with full and permanent immigration status."

Toronto





At the rally at Dundas Square in downtown Toronto, international students, migrant workers and refugees affirm that, "Status for all means that we will not be separated from our families and that we can have basic human rights. COVID-19 has worsened existing inequalities for migrants, refugees, undocumented people, workers, and students. We have been shut out of emergency income support, health care, and social services, while at the same time are forced to keep working. Status for all allows us to protect ourselves from victimization and discrimination from our bosses. Without status, as migrants, we are exposed and vulnerable, afraid to speak up. We want green light status for all."

Montreal





Protestors in Montreal rally outside the constituency office of Premier François Legault, to hold the Quebec government to account for its refusal to provide frontline and essential workers with status during the worst of the pandemic. They also pay tribute to friends and colleagues who contracted COVID-19 and died.

Halifax



(Photos: WF, Migrant Workers' Alliance for Change, Migrant Rights Network, Sanctuary Health, No One Is Illegal Halifax)

In Action to Defend Their Rights

BC Hospitality Workers Continue to Fight for Job Security



Hospitality workers hold 22-day demonstration at the BC Legislature, August 2020.

Hospitality workers in BC and throughout the country have been severely affected by the shutdowns related to the pandemic. They have justly made the claim that government should take measures under the emergency business powers that have been invoked to force employers to grant recall rights to laid off employees regardless of the length of their layoff due to COVID-19 shutdowns.

After a 22-day demonstration at the BC legislature and continuous pickets and rallies at the offices of MLAs, members of UNITE HERE Local 40 stopped their actions on September 1 after the announcement by Labour Minister Harry Bains that his government's recovery package would contain "a pledge for employers to offer a right of first refusal to existing employees when work resumes," i.e. an option for employers to "do the right thing." On its part, the NDP government has systematically refused to take up its social responsibility to protect jobs through guaranteeing recall rights.

On September 17 the BC NDP government released its "recovery package" entitled "Stronger BC for Everyone: BC's Economic Recovery Plan." The same day, Zailda Chan, President of UNITE HERE Local 40, issued a statement that condemned the plan for offering nothing of substance to protect the jobs of hospitality workers who have been laid off or terminated due to COVID. "The takeaway from this plan is that BC's hospitality workers are on their own," she said. The statement continues:



"While we can support economic assistance to hospitality employers, this should have been tied to a legally enforceable guarantee that if a business accepts tax dollars in any form you will return your laid-off staff when business improves.

"The province could easily support job security for all of BC's laid-off hospitality workers by granting workers a legal right of return to their pre-COVID jobs as conditions improve. We have

seen similar measures successfully implemented across the border in San Francisco, Los Angeles County and elsewhere. It would provide some certainty to laid-off workers and, more importantly, would not cost the province a dime."



On September 18 the government announced that it had established a Tourism Task Force, a 10-member body which will focus on "reigniting BC's tourism sector and enhancing its long-term competitiveness" and provided a \$50 million budget with, as yet, no terms of reference. Nine of the ten members are representative of the industry from across the province and the tenth, yet to be named, will be "a representative from the Labour sector."

Chan's statement concludes: "We look forward to learning more about the Tourism Task Force and how the province plans to reconnect laid-off workers to their jobs so that employers do not replace them with new lower wage workers when conditions improve."

The situation of hospitality workers who are fighting for recognition of their right to be recalled to their jobs no matter how long they are laid off related to the COVID-19 pandemic, is a situation that thousands of workers are facing, particularly those in the service sector. Not only does the government not protect and guarantee their right to recall to their jobs when businesses reopen or expand from initial reopenings, it is openly assisting employers to trample on unionized workers' hard-won wages and working conditions acceptable to them. For example, many hotel workers who had been employed on a regular full-time or part-time basis have been forced to accept casual, on-call, precarious work at reduced wages, without fixed schedules, benefits and any form of security. Employers are also imposing lower wages and working conditions on workers hired to replace laid off workers.

UNITE HERE Local 40 is continuing to fight for the rights of its members and for the rights of all workers, organized and unorganized, to dignity and respect, which includes the right to be recalled to their former positions.

(Photos: UNITE HERE 40)

Striking Ledcor Workers' "Drive for Dignity"

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers' Local 213, which represents the workers on strike against Ledcor Technical Services (LTS) announced on September 16:

"September 30th will mark a full year that we have been 'On Strike' against LTS. Members have remained strong on the lines, both at the downtown offices and across the street from our very Local, in the fight for a first agreement with this employer. Federal Labour code has given LTS time and leeway to extend this labour dispute, while they use SCABS to keep their business operating. The use of replacement workers must cease! Federal Labour Board hearings are scheduled for October. Please take some time to support and stand strong with these members as we approach this important time. The New Westminster and District Labour Council has assisted in organizing this COVID friendly drive for dignity. If you can make it by for a loop or two in your vehicle to wave and honk in solidarity, it will help immensely to demonstrate the spirit of our community and unionism to these workers, as they roll through 365 days of fighting for better

working conditions and the dignity they deserve."



Port Coquitlam
Rally to Mark One Year on Strike Against Ledcor
September 30 -- 10:30 am - 12:00 noon
1435 Broadway Street

The Ledcor workers in Port Coquitlam went on strike on September 30, 2019. The strike was provoked by the mass firing of 31 workers following a union meeting where members took a strike vote to put pressure on the company to get serious about negotiating. The workers are seeking a first contract which provides for job security and acceptable wages and working conditions. The union was certified as the bargaining agent for the workers more than two years ago and the strike vote was taken after months without progress in bargaining with LTS.

For one year the workers have been picketing daily outside the LTS production facility as well as picketing the Ledcor head office in downtown Vancouver and sending flying pickets to sites where LTS scabs are working. They have been supported throughout by the community and other unions including the United Steelworkers, BC Building Trades, the New Westminster and District Labour Council, and others.



Picket at Ledcor, December 10, 2019.

The workers' main work is the installation of fibre-optic cable. LTS contracts with Telus and other major communications companies to do this work. The LTS technicians are paid on a piece work basis which puts pressure on them to speed up, putting themselves and the public in danger. Telus also employs its own technicians who work on the fibre-optic network, who are paid hourly rates and have better working conditions than the Ledcor technicians. The Telus workers, members of

USW Local 1944, have supported the striking Leduc workers and all the workers know that the lowering of standards, wages and working conditions is an incentive for the monopolies like Telus to contract out more and more work in a "race-to-the-bottom." The telecommunications monopolies would like nothing better than to eliminate the permanent workforce and turn all technicians into individual "independent contractors" who would have no protection under the *Canada Labour Code* (federal) or the *Employment Standards Act* (BC).

The union has asked the Canada Labour Board to intervene and settle the terms and conditions of a first collective agreement as specified in section 80 (1)-(4) of the *Canada Labour Code* which allows the board to "inquire into the dispute and, if the board considers it advisable, to settle the terms and conditions of the first collective agreement between the parties." A hearing before the Board is not scheduled until October although the union's request was sent in December 2019.

Join the rally on September 30! Drivers are asked to drive around the LTS building at 1435 Broadway Street in Port Coquitlam and those who are walking should wear masks and practice physical distancing.

(Photos: WF, IBEW 213)

Ten Thousand Quebec Home Daycare Workers on Strike



Rally by early childhood home daycare workers on the first day of their general strike, September 21, 2020.

On September 21, facing an impasse in negotiations with the Quebec government for the renewal of their collective agreement, 10,000 early childhood workers who work in home daycares, members of the Federation of Early Childhood Workers of Quebec (FIPEQ-CSQ) began a general strike for their rights and dignity.

As is the case with so many workers in health care and social services, these workers are facing untenable conditions, which is driving many to leave the profession. One of the main problems is that home daycare workers are considered self-employed and therefore receive a subsidy per child instead of an hourly wage which is the case for workers in child care centres. The union reports that for the average home daycare worker, that subsidy works out to about \$12.42 per



hour. The union wants an arbitrator to evaluate its members' pay scale and wants those wages to increase to \$16.75 per hour, but the government is refusing.

Anne Dionne, a Vice-President of the FIPEQ-CSQ, said the poor conditions are causing a major shortage of daycare workers in the province. "Professionals are either leaving, closing, or worse -- no new ones are interested because of the poor conditions. In total 2,500 positions are vacant across Quebec," she said.

To avoid a general strike, the home daycare workers held rotating strikes for several weeks and organized demonstrations, including one in front of the Quebec National Assembly, to press their demands. The refusal of the Quebec government to settle the negotiations by entrusting the assessment of the pay scale calculation to an independent third party left them no choice but to go on strike, they said.



September 16, 2020 action by early childhood home daycare workers in Sherbrooke to press their demands.

The union clarified that the demand that home daycare providers earn the equivalent of \$16.75/hour instead of the current \$12.42/hour is based on the hourly wage for a non-trained, level 1 educator in a childcare centre.

In a September 20 press release Valérie Grenon, President of the FIPEQ-CSQ said that home daycare workers "are true early childhood professionals," pointing out that "They are at the same time an educator, food manager, bookkeeper, janitor, and so on." Grenon underlined this point by citing a Léger survey commissioned by the union to point out that family childcare providers who are members of the FIPEQ-CSQ have an average of 16 years of experience.

As part of the current negotiations, FIPEQ-CSQ proposed that the Ministry of Families consider the non-trained educator at level 1 as a comparable job to home daycare workers, provided that a family childcare provider job evaluation committee is set up to make recommendations on the actual tasks and jobs to be compared.

"This was already a major concession for our organization," states the president of the FIPEQ-CSQ in the press release. "All that remains to be settled is the calculation, but the Ministry of Families refuses to table its way of calculating."

Since the beginning of the negotiations, the Quebec Minister of Families has been very arrogant in responding to the demand of the home daycare workers for recognition of their profession and improvement of their conditions. Speaking on a radio program, Minister Mathieu Lacombe said that providing early childhood care at home is a way of life that the workers have chosen, and that they know what to expect in terms of working conditions and wages. "It's not cheap labour, it's a choice. It's a choice made by self-employed women who make that choice knowing how much

they're going to get." He repeated the same thing at the National Assembly on September 22, adding that the demands of the strikers are unreasonable and beyond Quebecers' ability to pay.

The striking home daycare workers have persisted in their just struggle and say that their fight is part of the overall movement to improve the working conditions of women workers everywhere.

"The message we are sending to the government today is clear: women are saying 'no' to a degrading wage below the minimum wage. We are not second-class workers. And more than just their income, family education providers are on the front lines for families and demanding better services for the future of their children," says the FIPEQ-CSQ in a press statement dated September 21. "These women are the first link in our education system; they are striking not for themselves, but to save the system and meet the needs of families. The situation is critical."

The strike of the 10,000 home daycare workers clearly points to the fact that the shortage of thousands of home child care providers for already licensed spaces will not be resolved without first improving the working conditions of home daycare workers.



Montérégie, September 18, 2020



Longueuil, September 18, 2020



Saint Thérèse, September 18, 2020



Trois-Rivières, September 17, 2020

(Photos: FIPEQ-CSQ)



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