



MODERATOR OF THE 146TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Daniel D. Scott, B.A., M.C.S, M.Div., D. Min.

December 14, 2021

The Honourable Sean Fraser P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
sean.fraser@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Fraser,

Greetings from The Presbyterian Church in Canada. At its online meeting June 6-9, 2021, the General Assembly considered and adopted a report on the protection of the rights of migrant workers.

Canada relies on the hundreds of thousands of temporary foreign workers that fill essential positions, often in low paying service and labour jobs. These workers care for family members and contribute to their communities and the economy. Yet the vulnerability of migrant workers is well documented. Many must rely on their employers for housing, access to health care and community services. Workers often face gruelling conditions and long hours. Exploitation and abuse occur without a clear path to remedy for fear of job loss or deportation. Provinces do not have consistent and sufficient legislation to safeguard the rights of migrant workers.

The impacts of COVID-19 have exacerbated these challenges. A report from the Caregivers' Action Centre (October 2020) outlines conditions where the closure of schools and employers working from home increased and intensified caregivers' work, sometimes without getting paid for extra hours of work. The overwhelming majority of these caregivers are racialized women, many of whom were cut off from social and personal supports and were even unable to send needed remittances home to family members abroad. Public health measures that aim to stop the spread of the virus are necessary but have also worsened situations where human rights have been violated or neglected.

The situation is complicated but there are steps the government could take now that would make significant improvements to the situation of migrant workers. One such step would be to sign and ratify the Domestic Workers Convention No. 189. Doing so would strengthen domestic workers rights by ensuring more stringent safeguards are in place for their conditions of employment, and by addressing issues such as equity in wages, hours, and days off. Ratifying the International Convention of the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families would be a second significant step to address the vulnerabilities of migrant workers in Canada by providing clear guidelines and standards for governments, communities, and employers. A third action that would ensure better protection of the rights of migrant workers is opening, and regularizing, fair and accessible pathways to permanent residency without arbitrary caps.

The church believes that all people are deserving of dignity and respect. Human rights conventions provide a framework for necessary standards for the protection of human dignity and wellbeing. We acknowledge and appreciate the government funding provided to organizations like KAIROS: Canadian

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Stephen Kendall and The Rev. Donald Muir

Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, in support of local groups that work with and assist migrant workers. These are necessary programs that do excellent work and should continue. But if the larger systemic injustices faced by migrant workers remain unaddressed, then the need for these programs will only increase.

The Government of Canada has an opportunity to set a standard for human rights protection and human flourishing. Will the Government take these important steps? I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel D. Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott
Moderator
The Presbyterian Church in Canada