

Government of Alberta Response

**Impact of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program on the Labour Market in
Alberta**

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) participating in Alberta's labour market. This is a trend largely related to the strong performance of Alberta's economy. Until 2006, less than one per cent of the province's total labour force was TFWs. However, with the federal changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program in 2007 and Alberta's growing economy at the time, the province saw a significant spike in the number of TFWs in the province to a high of almost 58,000 in 2008.

In 2010, Teresa Woo-Paw, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Employment and Immigration, was mandated to carry out a series of public consultations to identify where the TFW Program fits in Alberta's labour force planning, what role TFWs fill in Alberta's labour market and how to ensure the program is best serving the needs of Albertans. Over an eleven-week period, 14 consultation sessions were held in 12 different communities across Alberta. Stakeholders in attendance included immigrant-serving organizations, municipal governments, labour organizations, lawyers, consultants, educators and other community stakeholders. Nine closed sessions were held with TFWs.

In her report, Ms. Woo-Paw concludes that Alberta cannot continue to use the TFW Program to fill our province's long-term labour shortages. Of particular issue was the growing concern that increasing numbers of TFWs were filling what are essentially permanent jobs in Alberta's labour force. Although the report recognizes that TFWs have a place in our economy, it indicates Alberta needs to seek a long-term solution to the province's labour force needs.

The report includes the following four recommendations:

1. The Government of Alberta (GoA) must continue to be a strong advocate for the province's labour market and population growth needs.
2. The GoA should ensure the rights of temporary foreign workers are recognized and upheld by employers and communities.
3. The GoA should support and encourage welcoming, inclusive and engaged community initiatives throughout the province. Alberta communities, particularly smaller centres, are experiencing higher levels of diversity as a result of the TFW Program. Inclusive and engaged community initiatives would help communities to support TFWs and highlight their contributions to the province.
4. The GoA should explore different ways of communicating what services are available to employers and workers to ensure employers are aware of their rights and responsibilities to TFWs, and TFWs are provided with accurate and realistic information on the rights and responsibilities of working and living in Canada. An example could include a template for communities to use for welcoming and supporting newcomers by providing key information.

Report Recommendations	GOA Response
<p>1. The Government of Alberta (GoA) must continue to be a strong advocate for the province’s labour market and population growth needs.</p>	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The Government of Canada is solely responsible for the TFW Program. While it can help address labour shortages over the short term, it is not a viable long term solution. Through the <i>Building and Educating Tomorrow’s Workforce (BETW)</i> strategy and in ongoing programs, the GoA is growing our economy by first ensuring Albertans are trained and ready to take advantage of future labour market opportunities. The GoA is committed to working with other governments and industry in advocating for a flexible and responsive long term immigration strategy that will effectively meet our labour market needs.</p> <p>Three specific areas of advocacy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - urging the federal government to remove the annual caps on the number of provincial nominees; - exploring options for expanded routes to permanent residence for low- and semi-skilled TFWs; - selecting the right number of new immigrants with the right skills to immediately start work in their area of training.
<p>2. The Government of Alberta (GoA) should ensure the rights of temporary foreign workers are recognized and upheld by employers and communities.</p>	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The GoA is committed to ensuring the rights of all workers in Alberta, including TFWs are protected.</p> <p>The GoA is making substantial investments and continuously improving both education and enforcement activities to ensure employers and workers are aware of their rights and responsibilities.</p> <p>Areas of programming include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating the Temporary Foreign Worker Advisory Office. - Implementing telephone services to allow individuals to access services in 110 different languages.

<p>3. The Government of Alberta should support and encourage welcoming, inclusive and engaged community initiatives throughout the province. Alberta communities, particularly smaller centres, are experiencing higher levels of diversity as a result of the TFW Program. Inclusive and engaged community initiatives would help communities to support TFWs and highlight their contributions to the province.</p>	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The GoA will continue to work in partnership with the Alberta non-profit/voluntary sector and communities to support collaborative initiatives related to the active inclusion of all community members including TFWs.</p> <p>TFWs strengthen Alberta through their active participation in the labour market and in expanding the diversity of our communities. We will continue to advocate for new federal regulations that will allow more TFWs to become citizens of Canada so they can actively participate in our communities over the long term.</p>
<p>4. The Government of Alberta should explore different ways of communicating what services are available to employers and workers to ensure employers are aware of their rights and responsibilities to TFWs and TFWs are provided with accurate and realistic information on the rights and responsibilities of working and living in Canada. An example could include a template for communities to use for welcoming and supporting the newcomers by providing key information.</p>	<p>ACCEPT</p> <p>The GoA agrees it is important for employers and workers to have accurate and timely information.</p> <p>The GoA will continue to explore opportunities for increasing access to information for TFWs overseas, including in Canadian immigration offices in top source countries.</p> <p>Current publications include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Temporary Foreign Workers: A Guide for Employees</i> (in 13 languages) - <i>Temporary Foreign Workers: A Guide for Employers</i> - <i>Employment Standards Guide</i>