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Press Release

New Report- *Falling Short: Troubles with the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program in Nova Scotia*

March 27, 2024

Halifax/Kjipuktuk - Today, with the Migrant Workers in the Canadian Maritimes Partnership, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Nova Scotia (CCPA-NS) released the new report ***Falling Short: Troubles with the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program in Nova Scotia***. This report details the working conditions of temporary foreign workers in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker program in Nova Scotia. The report provides federal and provincial government recommendations to improve the working and living conditions of the temporary migrant workforce in the province.

Co-author Raluca Bejan, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at Dalhousie University and Research Associate of the CCPA-NS, had this to say, “Our research finds that migrant workers in Nova Scotia lived in overcrowded and substandard housing, despite the federal regulations requiring employers to provide adequate and suitable worker housing and to cap occupancy rates at a maximum of two people per bedroom. Our research points to a lack of regulatory implementation: Rules exist, but the Canadian state does not adequately enforce them. To deter non-compliance, the Government of Canada must hold employers accountable for implementing these occupancy guidelines through penalties, including steep fines.”

Dr. Bejan adds, “Migrant workers also performed piecework at rates lower than the minimum wage, solely advantaging their employers, who also seemed to under-count their boxes of produce. The provincial government needs to ensure that employers respect the rules outlined by the federal government and pay migrant workers no less than the minimum wage.”

“The provincial government must also use this report’s findings to better protect the health and safety of temporary agricultural workers in Nova Scotia, including enacting proactive workplace inspections and instituting 40 hours as a standard work week. There is an urgency to strengthen minimum labour standards for all workers and address the root causes of exploitation for these workers without permanent status. We should apply the same standards to all classes of workers and ensure all residents have access to the public services they need,” says Christine Saulnier, Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Nova Scotia.

Kristi Allain, a Professor of Sociology at St. Thomas University and co-author, adds, “As this study demonstrates, the conditions under which these workers labour are unacceptable. We hope that this study will spurn change in provincial and federal legislation in ways that work to protect the country’s most vulnerable workers.”



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Tracy Glynn, an assistant professor at St. Thomas University, co-author and co-founder of the Madhu Verma Migrant Justice Centre, said this: “Our report reveals the human toll of government policies failing to protect the rights of migrant workers in Nova Scotia. Our report is timely as federal Immigration Minister Marc Miller has promised to address the regularization of status of people in the country in Cabinet this Spring. We recommend temporary foreign workers be granted permanent residency on arrival to ensure they have access to essential services such as health care. Our report also recommends an end to closed work permits. All workers should have the right to labour mobility and the freedom to switch employers.”

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The report, ***Falling Short: Troubles with the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program in Nova Scotia***, is available for download at: <https://policyalternatives.ca/fallingshort>

For more information or to arrange an interview with one of the co-authors, contact Lauren Matheson at 902-579-9555 (cell) or lmatheson@policyalternatives.ca

The CCPA-NS is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with social, economic, and environmental justice.

The *Migrant Workers in the Canadian Maritimes Partnership* <https://tfwmaritimes.ca>