

**EXECUTIVE BOARD STATEMENT TO THE
TORONTO AND YORK REGION LABOUR COUNCIL
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
APRIL 6, 2006**

SECURING RIGHTS FOR UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

The deportation of thousands of hard working individuals and their families from our country is of great concern to the labour movement. Canada has been built by immigrants seeking a better life, but today the immigration system is broken.

Immigrants willing to work hard are filling key jobs within the construction, trades and service sectors. Without the protection of regularized status and without the protection of unions, these undocumented workers are exposed to exploitation. From abuse and dangers faced in the workplace, to abuse by unscrupulous immigration consultants, these workers require our solidarity. The manipulation by certain employers of undocumented workers results in the erosion of wages and benefits for all Canadian workers.

The construction and service sectors are ignored by Immigration Canada. Our immigration policy does not allow for workers to legally apply for immigration into many of the skilled trades and jobs in the service sectors that are required by our economy.

Canada was built by immigrants, people who made Canada their home seeking refuge and seeking opportunity. Since our country's existence, people have arrived through formal and informal channels. From the Underground Railroad, through the refugee claimants seeking asylum from repressive regimes, and migrants seeking a better future for their families, newcomers have built Canadian society.

Many of them also send money home so that their families can survive in economies that have been devastated by globalization. In countries like the Phillipines, these remittances provide a vital support for literally millions of people.

Canada needs to fix an immigration system that attracts highly trained individuals from all over the world but then excludes them from their chosen profession or trade. We need a system that is fair and that responds to our country's real economic needs. We need to protect the workers and their families who are caught by the failures of our immigration system and are now living fearfully without status and without rights. And we need to work toward a system that permits all workers in Canada the right to join a union.

Executive Board Recommendation:

1. The Toronto and York Region Labour Council joins in solidarity with other community organizations and movements to call on the Canadian government take the following steps to address this situation:
2. Introduce an immediate moratorium on further deportations of families in Canada
3. Establish a process of regularization for undocumented workers, leading to the ability of them and their family to apply for landed status.
4. Fix Canada's immigration point system so that it reflects the full range of labour force needs in Canada.
5. Stop the spread of the temporary "guest worker" program into different sectors of the economy.