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Editor
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We would like to add our voices to Daphne Bramham's editorial critique of the federal government's Temporary Foreign Worker Program that permits and encourages Canadian employers to substitute thousands of highly exploited temporary foreign workers for adequately trained and compensated Canadian workers [Chinese Workers Being Imported, Vancouver Sun, October 16, 2012].

The BC government has known about the abuses of temporary foreign workers under this program for several years but has done nothing to provide them with the special workplace protections needed to give them effective workplace and human rights consistent with those afforded to Canadian workers. Regulation of the minimum standards of employment for all workers in BC, except for those employed in industries under federal jurisdiction, is a provincial government responsibility. However, the BC Employment Standards Act is out of date and does not provide the minimum protections that the large and growing numbers of temporary foreign workers require because of their special indentured relationship with their employers, their exploitative conditions of work, and the unscrupulous foreign recruiters who also exploit them.

A number of other provinces have introduced temporary foreign worker employment regulations that begin to address the special and unique needs of this new disenfranchised class of worker in Canada, such as Manitoba with its Worker Recruitment and Protection Act. Over the past two years we have repeatedly urged the BC Ministry of Labour to introduce similar legislation through amendments to the BC Employment Standards Act, but to no avail to the extent that the government appears to be deaf to the issue. These legislative changes are even more necessary if the federal government is going to allow foreign resource extraction companies to bring thousands of temporary workers to BC instead of investing in the training of young Canadian workers and providing decent wages and working conditions.

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