

7. SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS
Submitted by the Niagara District Council of Women

- Whereas #1** Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAWs) do some of the most dangerous and difficult jobs in Canada, with some of the lowest wages and protections; and
- Whereas #2** SAWs may experience poor standards of housing or are housed in/adjacent to buildings containing chemicals, fertilizers, boilers, industrial fans and heaters; and
- Whereas #3** SAWs are subject to medical repatriation and are sent home when sick or injured; and
- Whereas #4** SAWs often face language barriers in understanding workplace health and safety regulations and health coverage and are not eligible for some settlement and support services; and
- Whereas #5** SAWs have taxes and Employment Insurance premiums deducted from their pay without access to the insurance benefits or the rights associated with citizenship; therefore be it
- Resolved #1** that the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopt as policy that Seasonal Agricultural Workers be protected and treated fairly and be informed of their rights and obligations; and be it further
- Resolved #2** that the NCWC urge the Government of Canada and provincial councils urge their respective governments to take immediate action to:
- a) enforce the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) and the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) to ensure that workers in these programs are paid the provincial seasonal average wage rate or better; and
 - b) inspect all SAWs housing before, after and randomly throughout the season; and
 - c) allow SAWs labour mobility to leave exploitative work situations; grant open work permits to workers whose employer is suspended; and implement an anti-reprisal mechanism to ensure employers don't unjustly repatriate workers (for example for complaining or due to injury or illness); and
 - d) ensure that workplace health and safety information is provided to SAWs in their own languages; and
 - e) ensure that SAWs have full access to the Employment Insurance program and special benefits (parental, maternal and compassionate benefits); and
 - f) facilitate a pathway for SAWs to permanent residence in every province under the provincial nominee programs by eliminating barriers to migrant

workers' access to Provincial Nominees Programs and by reducing or eliminating language requirements; and

- g) extend eligibility for settlement services to migrant workers and ensure that services such as translations and language instructions are adapted to the needs of these workers; and
- h) ensure that all SAWs receive a free medical exam before they return to their home country to confirm that they are healthy and free from workplace illness or injury; and
- i) commit to protecting migrant worker rights by signing the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.