

# Government allows thousands of employers to underpay TFWs

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10

## ***“Government shouldn't be in the business of helping employers keep wages low,” says AFL***

**EDMONTON** – An audit of the Temporary Foreign Worker program (TFWP) reveals that thousands of employers are being allowed to break the rules set up to stop employers from using TFWs to drive down wages.

The audit, conducted by the Alberta Federation of Labour, compared Statistics Canada’s prevailing regional wage rates to the approved wage rates from the approved applications of employers seeking to bring in Temporary Foreign Workers. The audit showed that employers were routinely allowed to pay TFWs minimum wage in industries and occupations that are supposed to pay higher rates.

“One of the major ‘fixes’ the Conservatives are suggesting to prevent the TFW program from putting Canadians out of work is a ‘wage floor’ for TFWs,” AFL president Gil McGowan said. “The documents show that the Harper government has regularly allowed employers to pay below-market wages, in contravention of the existing rules and all their empty promises. Why should Canadians believe them now?”

The results of the audit are shocking: of the 15,006 employers who were approved to bring in Temporary Foreign Workers, more than 14,500 were offering wages that were lower than what the government says these workers should be paid. The wages were below the prevailing wage rate anywhere from a few cents to \$11.45 an hour too low.

“The government shouldn’t be in the business of helping employers keep wages low,” McGowan said. “If an employer is offering minimum wage, they’re clearly not trying very hard to find Canadian workers. I suspect that if they could have paid any less, they wouldn’t have hesitated.”

TFWP regulations give Minister Kenney’s department the power to deny work permits if wages offered a worker in the Program are below prevailing regional wages for that particular occupation.

“The government has the ability – and the duty – to deny these work permits. These applications clearly state the wages that employers are offering, and the government has documentation of the prevailing wage rates,” McGowan said. “The fact that they didn’t bother to cross reference applications to the appropriate wage rates is an abject dereliction of duty. It shows that there is no enforcement of the Temporary Foreign Worker program, and it shows you can’t take it at face value when Minister Jason Kenney’s talks big about a crackdown.”

**AFL Temporary Foreign Worker Program – Report on Approvals at Minimum Wage, May, 2014**

-30-

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