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Temporary Foreign Workers Subject To 'Quasi-Indentured Status,' Jason Kenney Says

The Huffington Post Canada | By [Daniel Tencer](#) ([/daniel-tencer/](#))

Posted: 09/20/2014 11:08 am EDT | Updated: 09/20/2014 11:59 am EDT



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The Harper government has always had an ambivalent relationship with the Temporary Foreign Worker program, on one hand defending the businesses that say they have a legitimate need for the program, on the other working to rein in its

er.com/intent/tweet?text=Jason+Kenney+pretty+much+admits+temporary+foreign+worker+program+is+exploitation+http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/09/20/jason-kenney-foreign-workers-are-growing-pretty-frustrated-with-the-whole-issue/

1
or at least Kenney himself — are growing pretty frustrated with the whole issue.

In a series of tweets last week, Kenney dismissed the concerns of some fast food employers in Alberta that, without access to temporary foreign workers, their industry would suffer. Kenney used the word "ridiculous" to describe the concerns, and launched a remarkable series of tweets criticizing the foreign worker program his government is running:

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@kenneyjason

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9 RETWEETS 2 FAVORITES



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@kenneyjason

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This study by Centre for Economic Studies says TFWP created "substantial decrease in the mobility of CDNs" michelbeine.be/pdf/cesifo1_wp... @milkemark

12:13 PM - 10 Sep 2014

4 RETWEETS



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@kenneyjason

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Here's your @FraserInstitute colleague Martin Collacott raising serious concerns about TFWP's expansion: openparliament.ca/committees/imm... @milkemark

12:20 PM - 10 Sep 2014

3 RETWEETS 3 FAVORITES



Jason Kenney ン
@kenneyjason

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Where is the research concluding that Canada needs the govt to intervene to supply a lot more low-paid TFWs? Hint: there is none. @milkemark

12:27 PM - 10 Sep 2014

20 RETWEETS 9 FAVORITES

In an interview with the Charlottetown, P.E.I., Guardian this week, Kenney outlined an argument against the TFW program that sounded more like something that would come from the mouth of an NDP MP than a Conservative. He suggested foreign workers are essentially open to exploitation because of their temporary status in Canada.

"When people come in from abroad on a work permit, their immigration status is conditional on their work (<http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/News/Local/2014-09-19/article-3875241/Employment-Minister-Jason-Kenney-on-EI-and-TFW/1>)," Kenney told the newspaper.

"So often those folks that come in, the managers know they're going to show up every day for work. So there's a greater degree of reliability and in many respects, employers have begun to see [foreign workers] as a more efficient workforce, but that is not what it's there for," Kenney said.

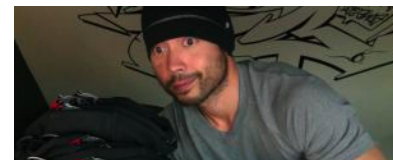
Setting aside the implication that Canadians don't show up for work, Kenney's comment is clearly an argument against the TFW program altogether.

In one telling moment, Kenney described foreign workers as being subject to "a kind of quasi-indentured status."

"Indentured" is a word that Kenney has been using recently to describe foreign workers (here's [an example from June](http://www.calgarysun.com/2014/06/24/employment-minister-jason-kenney-says-he-is-standing-up-for-canadians-and-free-enterprise/) (<http://www.calgarysun.com/2014/06/24/employment-minister-jason-kenney-says-he-is-standing-up-for-canadians-and-free-enterprise/>)) but ... wow. That's one step short of calling foreign workers slaves.

Kenney was talking to the media in P.E.I. this week after unveiling data from his department showing that [hundreds of fish processing plant workers were unemployed in the province last year](http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/News/Local/2014-09-19/article-3874699/P.E.I.-) (<http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/News/Local/2014-09-19/article-3874699/P.E.I.->

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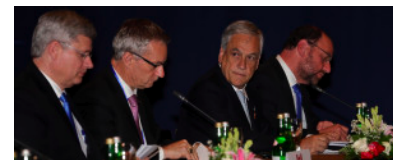
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[companies-hiring-foreign-workers-while-Islanders-collect-EI%3A-Kenney/1](#)), even as the plants hired between 50 and 245 temporary foreign workers.

He said the data is evidence of a “mismatch” in the labour market, and an example of how the TFW program is no longer the “last-resort” program it was meant to be.

He would not say whether the “mismatch” was evidence that employers are choosing foreign workers over local labourers. But nor would he suggest that out-of-work fish plant workers are improperly collecting EI instead of looking for work.

“It’s a question of really nudging both sides so that we can ensure that Canadians are taking Canadian jobs as much as possible,” Kenney said.

Earlier this week, Kenney said [the federal government had recorded a 74-per-cent drop in TFW applications](#) (http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/09/16/kenney-temporary-foreign-workers_n_5831406.html) this summer, compared to a year earlier, following an overhaul of the program announced earlier this year.

The Tories have raised the application fee for employers wishing to hire TFWs, tightened the standards for issuing a TFW permit and raised minimum pay for TFWs to the “prevailing wage” for the given job, from the previous standard of 15 per cent below the prevailing wage.

When asked what employers facing a labour shortage should do now that foreign workers are harder to come by, Kenney gave the Guardian a response typical of opponents of the program: Employers can just raise wages, he said.


“I believe that if there is a market problem, entrepreneurs have to find a market solution,” he said.

Employers should respond to labour shortages with “a mixture of options [such] as better wages and benefits, more flexible shifts and working hours” and other incentives, he said, adding that perhaps employers need “more aggressive recruitment efforts.”

So ... employers are cheap and lazy? This, coming from a Conservative cabinet minister?

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Thousands of people are using temporary permits to use the Alberta Federation of Labour recently obtained list of more than 100 companies that have used the “fast-track” process since it came into existence a year ago in 2013.

We took http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/09/23/apple-and-microsoft-lines-reselling-china_n_5868226.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular&ir=Canada+Business find out which of them are using the “fast-track”

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Impossible de charger le plug-in.

Message est a correction



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Conversations

50 comments

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Jim Beattie · Top Commenter

Somewhere in the bowels of the PMO 2015 election "WAR ROOM" is a computer printout showing what issues are the most dangerous to the CONS in the 2015 election.

The first item on the list is the TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER program.

Thus, Kenney has been made to "Eat Crow" in public and walk back the TFW program until after the 2015 election.

Imagine that, the moment the Cons came to power in 2006, they kicked the doors WIDE OPEN to the TFW program and FEASTED on the kickbacks that would be coming their way from the corporations in party memberships and contributions after the Harper/Kenney tandem handed them a 15% payroll saving discount when they hired TFW's.

Getting the CEO of the Royal Bank fired (excuse me, Nixon retired), after he was publicly outed in trying to replace 75 of his Canadian Information Technology staff with 75 TFW's from India and drum roll, please have those 75 Canadian IT workers give ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING to their 75 Indian replacements, was earthquake that put Kenney on his back from his unbridled promotion of the TFW program within the corporate community.

So, everything Kenney says is just bluster fluff electioneering -- we did bad over the TFW program but don't punish us at the polls, please!

Canadian voters annihilated the Mulroneyless Con Party in 1993, it is time to annihilated Harper's Con Party in 2015!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [39](#) · [Follow Post](#) · September 20 at 1:24pm



Ken London · Top Commenter

Well stated...thanks.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [1](#) · September 20 at 5:57pm



Diane Dodds

In my opinion the Mulroney Government has nothing on these guys, in fact looking back at all the fear mongering NAFTA caused with the water rights and the natural resources, compared with the present day sell off of Canadian sovereignty to Communist China with the newly minted FTA, those were the good ole days.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [16](#) · Edited · September 21 at 12:44am



July Bidle · Top Commenter · Laurentian High School

Employers need to wake up a little. For years I have been hearing "the government does not owe you a living" from right wing supporters who decry our social safety nets.

Well, employers, the government does not owe you a profit!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [28](#) · [Follow Post](#) · September 20 at 4:10pm



BT Coop · Top Commenter

But employers - big businesses, multinational corps - have government as puppets. Government is happy to oblige so that they have 'jobs' sitting around luxurious boardrooms when their time in politics on The Hill is over.

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Christine Ashton · Top Commenter · Enderby

Jason Kenney what a con. When his program is dismantled it becomes he designed it

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Jason Kenny what a con. it was his program, he understood it because he redesigned it. Now that people see it for what it is all of a sudden he is against it. Why should I be surprised after all he is one of Harper's gang.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 16 · [Follow Post](#) · September 20 at 4:56pm



Patrick Jordan Davis Westmacott · Phuket

And we should expect a retraction as soon as his masters in the tar sands tell him to shut it.

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Paddy Morris · Top Commenter

I dunno he may be in the tar sands after this.

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John Elliott · Top Commenter · Application Specialist at Scotia global wealth management

Prepping to be the next post Harper Conservative pm?

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 12 · [Follow Post](#) · September 20 at 11:45am



Jim Beattie · Top Commenter

Somewhere in the bowels of the PMO 2015 election "WAR ROOM" is a computer printout showing what issues are the most dangerous to the CONS in the 2015 election.

The first item on the list is the TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER program.

Thus, Kenney has been made to "Eat Crow" in public and walk back the TFW program until after the 2015 election.

Imagine that, the moment the Cons came to power in 2006, they kicked the doors WIDE OPEN to the TFW program and FEASTED on the kickbacks that would be coming their way from the corporations in party memberships and contributions after the Harper/Kenney tandem handed them a 15% payroll saving discount when they hired TFW's.

Getting the CEO of the Royal Bank fired (excuse me, Nixon retired), after he was publicly outed in trying to replace 75 of his Canadian Information Technology staff with 75 TFW's from India and drum roll, please have those 75 Canadian IT workers give ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING to their 75 Indian replacements, was earthquake that put Kenney on his back from his unbridled promotion of the TFW program within the corporate community.

So, everything Kenney says is just bluster fluff electioneering -- we did bad over the TFW program but don't punish us at the polls, please!

Canadian voters annihilated the Mulroneyless Con Party in 1993, it is time to annihilate Harper's Con Party in 2015!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 78 · September 20 at 1:24pm



Howard Burbidge · Top Commenter

Somebody's triangulating. Eye on the party leadership?

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 18 · September 20 at 1:37pm



Howard Burbidge · Top Commenter

D'oh...beat me to it, John.

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BT Coop · Top Commenter

So we'll all get to love the teddy bear, Jason Kenney, for doing what's right with the TFW program. Then, just when we think Stevie is going to lead the Reformers into the next election, Herr Harper will step aside, and Cuddly Kenney will be up front and centre as the saviour of the Cons.

Who's bettin' on Kenney being pushed forward as a gentler, more ethical PM....one with a conscience and sense of fairness for the masses?

DON'T BE FOOLED FOLKS! (You heard it here!)

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Heather Inglis · Top Commenter

There's more than TFW program to dislike about Kenney. He's was Harper's man assigned to cozy up to new Canadians to try to get their votes and pulled some not too savoury stuff there. Then there's his undying support for the anti abortion crowd.

He's different from Harper, but no better.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 4 · September 21 at 12:22am



Howard Burbidge · Top Commenter

Somebody's triangulating. Eye on the party leadership?

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 9 · [Follow Post](#) · September 20 at 1:37pm



Harry Paratestes · Top Commenter

So who hacked his twitter account? This cannot be the same clown that helped expand the temp foreign worker program.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 8 · [Follow Post](#) · September 20 at 7:21pm



Nicholas Todd · Top Commenter

Ah, but the key word here is "expand".

I agree with the analysis of this development as a political calculation, but I disagree that the Tories will do nothing to change the TFW, even over the objections of Alberta business owners, and here's why:

1. Now that they've found out how truly unpopular the TFW is with the public, the Harperites can very plausibly rebrand the TFW program as a Liberal program, since in its present incarnation it was actually introduced during a Liberal government. Then they'll say "See? We've killed that bad old LIBERAL TFW program!" (All the while encouraging the public to forget that the Cons expanded it).

2. The Harperites are going to axe the TFW program as a way to score points with the xenophobic anti-immigration part of its base. The TFWs will be sent packing back home as a result, and the Harperites will frame all opposition to the TFW program as anti-immigrant, rather than acknowledging the program's true flaw: its corrosive effect on ALL workers' rights (both foreign and domestic).

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Harry Paratestes · Top Commenter

I believe they'll give the illusion of stopping the program. Illusion key word. Businesses and corporations love it. Go to any city, and you'll see "help wanted" signs like crazy at factories and businesses that are not hiring....Canadians. They want cheap labour. They've tasted it and the easier profits and want more.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 4 · September 22 at 9:04am



Ray Klakowich · Top Commenter

A labor shortage of people willing to work at the poverty level

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 7 · [Follow Post](#) · September 20 at 7:43pm



Dan Quixote · Top Commenter · Victoria (Colombie-Britannique)

Kenney is talking sensibly - it must be an election year.

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