



ONTARIO TO EXPAND PROTECTION FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

Ontario is proposing to expand its labor law for protection of migrant workers. Issues on the charging of placement fees by recruitment agencies for workers who are looking for jobs and those changing their employment status from temporary to full-time worker, were raised in a consultation paper by the Ministry of Labour. If the proposals on the protection of workers become part of the Employment Standards Act, it will cover temporary foreign workers from the food service industry to farm workers and nannies.

Ontario is presently consulting with Manitoba, which had passed a landmark legislation to protect temporary foreign workers through its *Worker Recruitment and Protection Act*. The Manitoba law, to be introduced in the first quarter of 2009, will keep track of employers who bring in foreigners on temporary work permits and will license only Canadian recruiters. Families who hire nannies will have to register as well. The new legislation will replace the Employment Services Act, which currently governs the activities of third-party placement agencies in Manitoba.

Under the Manitoba law, all employers will be required for the first time to initially register with the province before the recruitment of foreign workers begins. The registration will ensure that employers are using a licensed recruiter and have a good history of compliance with labour legislation. In addition to employer registration, recruiters will be licensed and required to be members of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants or a law society. Recruiters will be prohibited from charging workers, directly or indirectly, any fees whatsoever for recruitment. The law aims to ensure that foreign workers are treated the same as any other worker in Manitoba so that employers, not the workers, bear the cost of recruitment. The new regulation intends to protect around 700,000 people in the province with temporary jobs.