

Regarding today's announcement on the Temporary Foreign Worker program

Today's announcement regarding the Temporary Foreign Worker program is the latest rescue mission for a program that is deeply flawed and needs to be replaced, not saved.

It's time to put the focus on long-term solutions for meeting Canada's skilled labour needs and phase out the parts of this program that are being abused – in particular the low-skills, low-wage part of the program.

What Minister Kenney did today was save the low-skills TFW program for employers who've become addicted to the low-wage temporary workers. Rationing the number of applications and raising fees is no deterrent for employers hooked on cheap labour – some of which are among the country's largest and most profitable businesses including Tim Horton's and McDonald's.

Patching over the program again and again with more red tape, as the Minister has done a number of times in recent years, isn't the answer either. Replacing it with a program that invests in homegrown skills to permanently deal with labour shortages and one that offers fairness to skilled workers from abroad by welcoming them into Canada with an opportunity to stay is the solution that works best.

Telling Canadians they come first in the job market (repeatedly) is the height of Orwellian sloganeering when Canada's expenditures on workplace training are among the lowest in the industrialized world and employer investment in training has fallen by 40% over a generation.

Add to this the sad fact that only 19% of skilled trades employers train apprentices, and only half of all apprentices currently complete their training and the problem is laid bare.

Building a highly skilled workforce is central to our country to confront the economic challenges it faces today and will face in the years ahead. The time for cheap, temporary fixes to accommodate employers unwilling to train and invest in homegrown skills is over.

All that's missing is strong leadership and serious investment from the federal government. We didn't see that today.

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