

Migrant Stories, Industry Narratives:
A Critical Discourse Analysis on Migrant Labour in Canadian
Agriculture

by
William Louis Helps

A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Rural Studies

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

© William Louis Helps, December, 2025

Abstract

Migrant Stories, Industry Narratives: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Migrant Labour in Canadian Agriculture

William Louis Helps

Advisor:

University of Guelph, 2025

Dr. Ryan Gibson

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, many Canadians have become newly aware of problematic power imbalances and potential for abuse under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), which forms a key component of the Canadian agri-food workforce. The increased attention brought to some of the negative outcomes of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system appear to have prompted an industry response, including through the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative launched by a collection of agri-food industry groups. This dissertation presents the results of research on texts gathered from the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative. Critical discourse analysis was used to identify themes, arguments, and rhetorical techniques the initiative employs to convey a narrative about migrant farm workers to the public. Findings indicate that these agri-food industry groups have adopted a defensive stance in response to critiques of migrant labour policies, as demonstrated by the discourse's treatment of themes such as migrant workers' and their families' financial motivations, the purported necessity of migrant labour to sustain Canadian food production, and the formal rights and protections built into the TFWP, combined with a de-emphasis of the evidence of persistent systemic issues in the protection of migrant workers from mistreatment. The findings support a theoretical framework of managed migration based on a combination of Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration, in which the devaluation of agricultural work in the

domestic labour market and the disruption of traditional economies by neoliberal global market forces generate a demand for and supply of migrant labour, respectively. The paper's conclusion provides directions for further research to expand academic knowledge of migrant labour discourse and migration theory, as well as recommendations for policy makers, the agri-food industry, and advocacy groups for productive policy discussions that find consensus on ways to protect and improve the conditions of migrant farm workers.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation represents the culmination of not only my doctoral degree, but the past seven years of graduate study I have spent at the University of Guelph since starting my MSc in Rural Planning and Development. This journey would not have been possible without many sources of academic and personal support from friends, family, and colleagues along the way.

I count myself extremely lucky to have been supported from the beginning by my advisor, Dr. Ryan Gibson, who has been a source of not only guidance throughout my academic journey, but also confidence in my own ability to grow and pursue my interests. My work has also benefitted greatly from the contributions of my advisory committee members, Dr. Silvia Sarapura and Dr. Jill Bucklaschuk, whose insights have always made my research stronger and my writing sharper.

Of course, I would not have been able to get myself to this point without the love and support of my wife Diana, who has supported me through my Master's fieldwork, a pandemic-necessitated long-distance relationship, five moves, two cats (Crema and Queso), and one whole doctoral degree. I can't wait to have more time to go on epic bike rides, try new restaurants, talk about the world, and all the other things we love to do together.

Finally, I have to thank my mom and dad, Jan and Gary Helps, who have always been the people cheering the loudest for me to succeed. Knowing that the two of you are only a phone call away has helped me through so many situations. In addition to always being there to help me out of a jam, you're also two of my favourite people to sit down and talk through my crazy ideas with.

In addition to the personal support of those listed above, my doctoral studies were made possible with the financial support of an Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs Highly Qualified Personnel scholarship and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
List of Appendices	x
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Structure.....	10
1.2 Scope and Limitations.....	12
1.3 Positionality	14
2 Literature Review	19
2.1 The Formation, Expansion, and Resilience of Agricultural Migrant Labour Systems.....	23
2.2 Academic Discourse on Migrant Labour Practices in Agriculture	36
2.3 Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the Growing Demand for Migrant Farm Workers.....	52
2.4 The New Economics of Labour Migration and Migrant Workers as a Global Labour Reserve.....	67
2.5 Stakeholders in Canada's Agricultural Migrant Labour System	77
2.6 A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Migrant Labour Discourse	86
2.7 Summary	92
3 Methodology	94
3.1 Application of Critical Discourse Analysis Methods	97

3.2 Selection of Texts	99
3.3 Analysis of Texts	103
4 Findings and Discussion.....	106
4.1 Migrant Workers in Industry Discourse	108
4.1.1 Families and Motivation	109
4.1.2 Migrants in the Workplace	117
4.1.3 Migrant Farm Workers Outside of Work	124
4.2 Agricultural Migrant Labour and Interdiscursive Conflict	128
4.2.1 Migrant Worker Health, Housing, and the Pandemic.....	129
4.2.2 Agri-Food Industry Discourse on Migrant Workers' Rights.....	138
4.3 Discussion: Discourse, Misconceptions, and Narratives of Agricultural Migrant Labour.....	148
4.4 Discussion: Industry Discourse and Migration Theory	153
5 Conclusion	161
5.1 The State of Agricultural Migrant Labour Discourse	161
5.2 Contributions to the Literature	164
5.3 Directions for Future Study	167
5.4 Recommendations	169
5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy Makers	170
5.4.2 Recommendations for Employers and the Agri-Food Industry.....	172
5.4.3 Recommendations for Advocacy Groups.....	176
5.5 Final Reflections.....	177
Bibliography	181
Appendix I: List of Selected Texts for Critical Discourse Analysis.....	214

Appendix II: List of Codes Captured During Critical Discourse Analysis	246
--	-----

List of Figures

Figure 1: Quarterly Agricultural TFW Permit Holders in Agriculture, 2015-2023 (Government of Canada, 2024)	32
Figure 2: Agricultural TFW Permit Holders, January-June, 2018-2022 (Government of Canada, 2024).....	33
Figure 3: Visualization of Theoretical Framework	87

List of Abbreviations

CAHRC: Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council

FARMS: Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services

FFCO: Food and Farm Care Ontario

GGO: Grape Growers of Ontario

IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

ILO: International Labour Organization

IOM: International Organization for Migration

IRCC: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

LMIA: Labour Market Impact Assessment

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

SAWP: Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program

OAG: Ontario Apple Growers

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OFGGMB: Ontario Fresh Grape Growers Marketing Board

OFVC: Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention

OFVGA: Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association

OGVG: Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers

OPB: Ontario Potato Board

OPMA: Ontario Produce Marketing Association

OTFG: Ontario Tender Fruit Growers

TFWP: Temporary Foreign Worker Program

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

List of Appendices

Appendix I: List of Selected Texts for Critical Discourse Analysis

Appendix II: List of Codes Captured During Critical Discourse Analysis

1 Introduction

This dissertation presents the results of critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2022; Van Dijk, 2015) applied to *More than a Migrant Worker*, an initiative launched by a collection of industry groups in the province of Ontario to influence public opinion surrounding Canada's agricultural migrant labour streams under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). Migrant labour has been an important component of the Canadian agri-food workforce for nearly sixty years, starting with the inception of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) in 1966. This program continues into the current day as the largest of four streams in the TFWP providing access to migrant labour for the agricultural sector alongside the Agricultural Stream and High-Wage and Low-Wage streams.

Altogether, these four streams brought in nearly 70,000 workers for agricultural industries and 45,000 for food and beverage production industries as of 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2024). The employers participating in the TFWP represent a broad section of the Canadian agri-food sector, with the largest groups of workers to be found in horticultural industries such as greenhouse, nursery and floriculture (26,355); vegetable and melon farming (16,095); and fruit and tree nut farming (12,385) (Statistics Canada, 2024). Research has found the use of these labour migration streams within the TFWP to be associated with higher profitability for employers despite the additional costs associated with providing housing and transportation for workers (Mussell, 2015). Employers value continued access to these streams quite highly due to the amount of control they offer in filling vacancies which are often short-term, seasonal, and difficult to

recruit locally. In fact, agri-food employers and the various associations and industry groups that represent them have played a key role in establishing and broadening the scope of Canada's labour migration programs.

The Canadian government introduced the SAWP in response to organized demands from employers for the ability to hire migrant workers (Binford, 2019). In the decades since, leaders within the sector have taken an increasingly active role in administering the agricultural streams of the TFWP, such as through the creation of the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Service (FARMS), a non-profit organization started by agri-food employers to handle most applications to hire migrant farm workers, as well as a variety of other human resources matters (Miller, 2018). Such organizations have helped agricultural employers to successfully recruit greater numbers of migrant workers to meet the sector's growing labour needs, as reflected by the ever-increasing number of agri-food workers who arrive through the TFWP each year.

While agri-food employers have increasingly turned to the TFWP, Canada's migrant labour policies have met with criticism, including from academic researchers who have long argued that aspects of the TFWP's structure, in which migrants are assigned to an individual workplace, creates a power imbalance in favour of the employer (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012). With their legal migration status tied to their continued employment and the inability to change workplaces without Canadian government approval, workers can become stuck in potentially exploitative or abusive circumstances. For example, research has documented that some workers report encountering employers who provide inadequate housing (Helps, 2020), punish workers

for taking sick days or seeking medical care (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019) and require workers to accept unsafe work conditions (Landry, et al., 2021).

In addition to these unequal power dynamics between workers and employers, there are additional contextual factors which research shows negatively affect migrant farmworkers. These include a lack of appropriate services such as linguistically and culturally sensitive medical care (Colindres et al., 2021) and instances of racist and xenophobic behaviour by residents in the areas where they work (Binford, 2019). As I demonstrate in greater depth in the second chapter of this dissertation, the academic literature on migrant labour practices in Canadian agriculture from the past 25-plus years presents a consensus that these programs do not adequately provide for and protect migrant farmworkers at their workplaces or in the communities where they reside.

In addition to this growing body of academic literature, the Canadian agri-food industry's use of migrant labour has drawn the attention of international organizations and sending country governments to investigate the structural power imbalances and associated abuses of the TFWP. In particular, United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur Tomoya Obakata conducted a Canadian tour in August 2023, resulting in a mission statement and later full report which referred to Canada's labour migration system as "a breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery, as it institutionalizes asymmetries of power that favour employers and prevent workers from exercising their rights" (Obakata, 2024, p. 5). Obakata's findings drew national and international media headlines (Cecco, 2024; Murray, 2024), calls for reform from rights organizations (Glynn & Rao, 2024;

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, 2024) and unions (Canadian Union for Public Employees, 2024; United Steel Workers, 2025), and swift rebuttals from employers and agri-food industry representatives (Campbell, 2024; Canadian Grocer Staff, 2023).

Reports of migrant worker exploitation have also generated considerable attention from news media and advocacy groups. Articles drawing attention to alleged abuses of migrant farm workers have emerged periodically for years but began to surface with increased frequency during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the coronavirus spread in large numbers on and between farms employing migrant workers. This crisis drew attention to the vulnerability and the often-unhealthy living and working conditions experienced by these workers, resulting in a notable uptick in coverage from Canadian media outlets (Helps et al., 2022). The work of advocacy groups fighting for improved rights and conditions for migrant workers has also intensified in recent years. Groups such as Justicia for Migrant Workers have conducted independent investigations into workers' rights abuses and held demonstrations in support of enhanced migrant rights in the face of increased securitization of the agricultural workspace following the onset of the pandemic (Ramsaroop, 2023). While migrant labour in agriculture still may not register as a high priority among the general Canadian public, migrant labour discourse within Canadian media does appear to be more prominent than ever.

Agri-food industry groups and employers, of course, have taken notice of the increased scrutiny from academia, news media, and advocacy groups. Within the industry, some reactions could be categorized as defensive. I personally first witnessed

this at the annual Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention (OFVC) in February 2023, in a highly attended session on labour, in which representatives of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (OFVGA) and FARMS described what they seemed to view as an unfair characterization of the industry's employment of migrant labour in public discourse, and presented a concerted strategy to counteract purportedly false narratives. As an attendee at this session, I could feel an energy amongst the crowd that I would describe as indignant. It was not an energy one might expect from a meeting of employers at an industry-focused event where other sessions presented innovations to increase productivity and corporate sponsors showed off the latest tractors and irrigation solutions on the trade show floor. Presenters at the session highlighted an apparent lack of positive media coverage of migrant farm labour, as well as a perception that negative coverage was causing public sentiment to turn against the industry. However, as an observer of migrant rights issues, I have seen no evidence of any kind of widespread demand for a reduction or elimination of migrant labour in the agri-food sector. Even as public opinion of immigration has soured in Canada the past few years, surveyed Canadians have continued to support the use of the TFWP and SAWP to fill vacancies where local workers cannot satisfy demand (IRCC, 2024). Nonetheless, this session first brought to my attention how some within the agri-food industry sense the growth of discourses that question the ethics of this labour source.

The session I attended at OFVC also brought my attention to what is likely the most prominent example of an industry group's response to this discourse, the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative. *More than a Migrant Worker* is an online media campaign hosting stories and information about migrant farm workers, organized by a

collection of agri-food industry groups led by OFVGA, who appear to be listed as the primary author behind their website (OFVGA, 2024a). Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG), Ontario Apple Growers (OAG), and Food and Farm Care Ontario (FFCO) are listed as partners, while Ontario Asparagus, the Ontario Produce Marketing Association (OPMA), the Ontario Potato Board (OPB), Ontario Berries, Ontario Tender Fruit Growers (OTFG), Ontario Fresh Grape Growers Marketing Board (OFGGMB), and Grape Growers of Ontario (GGO) appear as supporters of the initiative (OFVGA, 2024a). Together, these groups represent a broad swath of the Ontario horticultural industry, which accounts for many of the sub-industries that employ the most migrant workers, as mentioned above, in the province that sees the most migrant farmworkers arrive each year.

More than a Migrant Worker is quite transparent about being a response by these groups to the critiques of migrant labour highlighted above. In an *Ontario Grower* article profiling the initiative, a representative states that “the idea for the campaign was sparked in the winter of 2021 as growers and industry representatives grew increasingly frustrated with misinformation being written in the media and shared online” (Denard, 2022). Among the content presented on the website is a collection of worker profiles based on interviews with migrant farm workers, presented in both text and in videos hosted on the initiative’s [YouTube channel](#). Representatives of the initiative further explained in the *Ontario Grower* profile that interviews were arranged through “a callout to farmers and migrant workers”, made use of translators where required, and that all stories were “read and proofed by each worker that was involved” (Denard, 2022). A news section shares stories on migrant farmworkers, many of which also appear in

online publications and newspapers. There is also a section for educators' resources, a fact sheet, a blog, and a page for frequently asked questions. An in-depth breakdown of how many of each type of text I collected and analyzed for this dissertation is provided in Chapter 3. The target audience for most of this material appears to be the general Canadian public. *More than a Migrant Worker* is mostly free of technical industry or policy information, indicating that it is likely not intended for industry insiders or for policy makers.

Learning of this initiative prompted me to investigate the contents of agri-food industry discourses. The OFVC session I attended made it clear that these groups are interested in pushing back against the mounting critiques of migrant labour practices, but what alternative messaging are they putting out into the world? I believe that the concerns and arguments of these industry groups are worthy of consideration and critical discussion within the academic discourse surrounding agricultural migrant labour programs, not only because they represent, to a certain extent, perspectives present in the industry itself as a central actor in managed migration systems, but also because these groups are clearly making an effort to sway public opinion on a highly contentious issue. For these reasons, in this dissertation I am presenting the results of a critical discourse analysis on industry discourse about migrant farm workers, focusing on the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative.

This critical discourse analysis is informed by a theoretical framework combining Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration to explain Canada's agricultural managed migration system and its structural power

dynamics. Labour Market Segmentation Theory argues that inequalities in the labour market are the result of socially constructed conditions that shape access to work in unequal ways and segregate workers into distinct segments (Graham et al, 2017). This theory provides an explanation for the growing demand for migrant labour amongst agricultural employers as many agri-food jobs have typically fallen into the less valued segments of the labour market, which provide limited pay, security, and opportunity for advancement (Cain, 1976; Seo, 2021). My framework simultaneously uses New Economics of Labour Migration theory, which presents the decision to temporarily migrate for work as one undertaken by migrants' families in response to local economic circumstances such as limited opportunity or insecurity of income sources (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1999). I use New Economics of Labour Migration theory to explain how migrant workers' choices are constrained by their need to maintain their employment in Canada to support household finances of families in their home countries. In combination, these two theories provide a framework wherein global market forces have driven both the supply of prospective migrant workers in the Global South and the demand for these workers in Canada, with the result being the ever-expanding numbers of migrant farm workers recruited to fill the Canadian agri-food industry's needs. This framework supports my analysis of the agri-food industry discourse, as it explains both employers' and workers' continued interest in the expansion of Canada's agricultural migrant labour programs and the resulting problematic power dynamics described in the literature. While both theories have been applied individually to agricultural migrant labour, including in Canadian contexts, no prior attempts to combine them into a cohesive framework were identified.

This dissertation builds on existing literature and my own previous research on labour migration systems in Canadian agriculture, including my Master's thesis about the experiences of Mexican migrant workers (Helps, 2020), by addressing a gap in the current managed migration literature. The literature presented in chapter 2 analyses the TFWP from various angles, including its policy structure, workers' health outcomes, the impact of remittances, and the conditions workers experience on farms. There is also literature that analyzes discourse generated by this system, such as Tungohan and Careless' (2023) review of broadsheet news media's treatment of migrant labour from 2010-2020. However, there is a lack of existing literature analyzing the role of agri-food industry groups in generating discourse on migrant workers. Perhaps this is due to the relatively recent emergence of this discourse, as prior to the founding of *More than a Migrant Worker*, there was no similar initiative on such a scale, as I found during data collection, as described in Chapter 3. The lack of existing literature on agri-food industry migrant labour discourse led me to seek answers to my two central research questions:

1. How does the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative portray Canada's agricultural migrant labour system to the public?
2. How does this portrayal respond to critiques of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system identified in the academic literature?

The resulting critical discourse analysis provided findings that indicate an increasing defensiveness of some agri-food industry groups in response to scrutiny and critique of migrant labour practices following the COVID-19 pandemic. From the industry discourse contained in *More than a Migrant Worker* emerges a narrative of Canada's

agricultural migrant labour system that presents it as mutually beneficial to migrant workers, agri-food employers, and Canadian consumers, with little apparent recognition of potential systemic problems with the TFWP identified in the literature as increasing migrant workers' vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. My analysis presents ways that this discourse upholds existing power dynamics which are shown in the academic literature to favour employers and make migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. While the scope of this research is limited to a set of discourse generated by a collection of agri-food industry groups in the province of Ontario, these findings may indicate increased resistance to policy change, collaboration, and outside critique among parts of the agri-food industry employing thousands of migrant farm workers.

1.1 Structure

To establish my framework for this dissertation, I start with a review of the academic literature in Chapter 2. Specifically, I draw on two prominent theories of temporary migration, Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration to form a framework that explains the growth in the use of migrant labour in the Canadian agri-food industry through these two theories. Within my framework, global market forces and neoliberal policy have reshaped labour markets to fuel the supply of and demand for migrant workers in agriculture. Labour Market Segmentation Theory is used to explain that market segmentation has reduced the availability of domestic workers for farmwork in high-income economies such as Canada's while New Economics of Labour Migration theory explains how families in migrant-sending countries make migration decisions within constrained options to

achieve financial prosperity in rural economies that have been disrupted by globalization and free-market reforms. This framework contextualizes the critiques that have been made regarding Canada's agricultural migrant labour system and the agri-food industry's own discourse responding to these critiques.

In Chapter 3, concerning methodology, I present my use of critical discourse analysis to draw out the key themes and arguments of materials generated by agri-food industry groups regarding the TFWP and SAWP. Texts for this critical discourse analysis were drawn from the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative, as it is by far the most expansive body of grey literature published about migrant farm workers by any agricultural organization in Canada. As I explain in this chapter, I used methods of critical discourse analysis described by Locke (2004) and Wodak (2021) to identify themes in agri-food industry-produced media and discuss them within the context of the Labour Market Segmentation Theory- and New Economics of Labour Migration-based framework presented in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 4, I present the results of this critical discourse analysis in detail, outlining the key themes identified in agri-food industry groups' public messaging on migrant workers. Here, I demonstrate how the discourse shows that agri-food industry groups have reacted defensively in response to elevated criticism about migrant labour practices in the years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. My analysis shows how themes that are prevalent throughout the discourse, such as migrant workers' motivation to improve the material conditions of their families, the necessity of migrant workers to sustain Canada's agri-food industry and food security, and an emphasis on

the formal rights and protections for migrant farm workers under the TFWP and SAWP work to undermine and deflect from prominent critiques of Canada's migrant labour system. I also discuss how these themes support the applicability of a New Economics of Labour Migration- and Labour Market Segmentation Theory-based theoretical framework to agricultural migrant labour systems such as Canada's.

Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of what this research contributes to the literature, directions for further study, recommendations for policy makers, the agri-food industry, and migrants' advocacy groups, and some final personal reflections on my findings about the agri-food industry discourse.

1.2 Scope and Limitations

Before going further, it is important to clarify the scope of this project and the limitations that apply. The critical discourse analysis presented in this dissertation was conducted on one agri-food industry initiative. All grey literature selected for analysis either came from the *More than a Migrant Worker* website directly or from a third-party website linked to by this initiative. The views and opinions expressed in the selected texts can only be attributed to those who wrote and/or published them. *More than a Migrant Worker*, as already mentioned, is an initiative created by a collection of groups representing subsets of the Ontario agri-food industry. While many of their members, some of whom provide commentary throughout the texts, employ migrant workers, these industry groups themselves do not. The discourse captured, therefore, represents the views of employers only by proxy of these groups of which many employers are members.

The findings of this research are drawn from my critical analysis of this set of texts, as informed by existing academic literature about Canada's agricultural migrant worker programs. While I considered conducting key informant interviews with individuals connected to *More than a Migrant Worker* as an additional data source, I decided that interviews with industry representatives were unlikely to provide valuable insights beyond what the organizations behind this initiative have already clearly stated about their intentions and approach in the written texts collected from their website. As a result, interviews were avoided to focus on the critical discourse analysis, as explained in greater detail in Chapter 3. The findings drawn from my analysis should not be conflated with the personal views of any individual or organization connected with *More than a Migrant Worker*, as they are the product of my own inferences about the possible implications of this discourse within a critical understanding of the agricultural migrant labour context.

This research also should not be viewed as a definitive guide to the migrant labour discourse of the entire Canadian agri-food industry, but rather as a snapshot of one specific collection of organizations representing some agri-food employers within the province of Ontario. Even with these limitations, however, the implications of this research are valuable, firstly because, as explained above, Ontario is the largest destination for migrant farm workers in Canada and some of the industries represented by these groups, such as horticulture, employ more migrant workers than most other types of agri-food production (Statistics Canada, 2024). As such, the discourse being promoted through *More than a Migrant Worker* is generated on behalf of a substantial portion of Canada's agri-food employers. Secondly, these groups' effort appears truly

unprecedented in Canada, as no other comparably widespread media campaign has been created in any other province or by other groups. The existence of *More than a Migrant Worker* provides an unusually rich source for understanding how at least some of the industry approaches multi-stakeholder conversations about migrant workers' current conditions and potential future changes.

1.3 Positionality

It is important to briefly reflect on my own positionality in relation to the often-contentious topic of migrant farm workers. In recent years, acknowledgment of the researcher's positionality and the resulting impact that this can have on the collection and interpretation of data has gained broader acceptance within the social sciences, particularly in class-conscious and feminist research (Mitchell et al., 2024). Given my dissertation's focus on a system that includes complex power dynamics centered on citizenship, class, race, and gender, it would be irresponsible not to acknowledge the position of privilege from which I approach this topic.

To start with the most obvious, in this dissertation and elsewhere I have written about issues that are primarily experienced by people of colour from countries in the Global South, attributes which do not apply to me. As a white, cisgendered man living in Ontario, Canada, with no apparent disability or other disadvantage, I approach this topic as a privileged outsider. My work has benefitted from the perspectives of many individuals from different backgrounds, including numerous colleagues and friends from Mexico who have closer personal ties to migrant farm workers than I do. Nonetheless, there will always be a distance between me and my subject that affects how I collect,

perceive, and interpret the data. Power dynamics intrinsic to my identity have had a more obvious impact in work I have done in the past that involved key informant interviews with migrant farm workers themselves, something I have not done for this dissertation. However, where I discuss the needs and interests of migrant farm workers in this paper, I strive as much as possible to defer to the voices of workers themselves as captured through a broad range of literature.

Beyond the ways in which my identity and privilege relate to migrant farm workers, I would like to briefly explain my personal relationship to the mostly rural places where these issues play out and to Canada's agri-food industry. I have written this dissertation mostly from deep within this country's urban core: my apartment and an assortment of coffee shops and public libraries in Toronto, Ontario. As indicated by some of the findings in Chapter 4, there are few things that the agri-food industry appears to find more irritating than urbanites criticizing agriculture without any personal experience or knowledge of how food is grown. While I did not grow up on a farm myself, I did grow up in rural Ontario, having spent most of my childhood in Dufferin County, whose rolling hills are known for their cattle, soy, and corn production. This area does not host as many migrant farm workers as the greenhouse operations of Leamington or the fruit orchards and vineyards of the Niagara region, but there are certainly some around. In this context, I grew up with an awareness of where food came from, but an incomplete idea of who was involved, centred mostly on white Canadians like most of my neighbours and those commonly portrayed in media.

Following my Master's studies at the University of Guelph and several years researching migrant farm workers and the key role that they play in Canadian agri-food production, I have come to recognize that our food passes through many more hands than I would have expected before it arrives on grocery store shelves. I also learned that in many cases it is partly the product of a lower-income, precarious migrant workforce. In the years since, I have written about the need for a system that supports and protects migrant farm workers because of factors that impede their access to services (Helps et al., 2022). I have also critiqued the current structure of the SAWP and TFWP, explaining in my master's thesis that there is an ever-present power imbalance between migrant farm workers and employers, even if said employers enter the program with the intention to provide a safe and supportive work environment (Helps, 2020). As found in that thesis, many employers do take steps to mitigate the isolation, barriers to services, and other challenges faced by migrant workers, but there seems to always be a possibility of employers taking advantage of workers' vulnerability if they choose to exploit them. I have presented these findings at numerous conferences and guest lectures, to audiences ranging from undergraduate students to policy makers to employers. Across my writings and presentations on this topic my position has remained consistent: that Canada's agricultural migrant labour system is overly restrictive of workers' rights in a way that hands disproportionate power to their employers, primarily due to permits which tie workers in most cases to a single employer.

While I critique the problematic power dynamics built into this system, I have only ever advocated for reform, rather than a complete elimination of agricultural migrant

labour, something that some other researchers have called for in the past (Binford, 2019). My restraint comes from both pragmatism about the feasibility of sweeping policy change and from my personal understanding of migrant farmworkers' interests, particularly stemming from my earlier research work in Mexico. While I have heard many stories of hardship faced by migrant workers, I have never heard them voice support for wholesale abolition of these programs. Instead, workers have repeatedly explained to me how access to this income stream was essential to keeping their families' finances stable and improving their quality of life (Helps, 2020). Such accounts should not be surprising, even with all the critiques leveled at the agricultural migrant labour system by myself and others. The system can be unjust while still materially benefitting those it routinely exploits. However, it does mean that academic researchers have a heightened responsibility to avoid twisting, exaggerating, or otherwise misusing the stories of these workers. As I found while finishing that thesis, at a certain point a researcher must leave prior assumptions at the door and defer to the lived experiences of others.

In my critical analysis of the agricultural migrant labour system, I am also conscious of the ways in which this dissertation might be received by the agri-food industry, and particularly by the groups that created many of the texts I have analyzed. The very existence of this body of grey literature, which in some instances presents itself in explicit terms as a rebuttal to critiques from outsiders, indicates to me that this dissertation might not receive the warmest welcome from such groups. I have encountered defensive attitudes from agri-food employers before when presenting my work and have explained that it is not my intent to denigrate the entire industry or claim

that every individual employer is intentionally exploiting and abusing workers (a claim that, to be clear, I have not seen any other academic researcher make either). Instead, with this project I aim simply to explain the role that discourse plays in shaping public perception of agricultural migrant worker programs in Canada.

2 Literature Review

My critical discourse analysis on agri-food industry discourse about Canada's migrant labour programs is largely intended to explain why some industry groups are playing an increasingly active role in shaping public opinion on this topic, as seen with the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative. Why are these groups so concerned with public perception of these programs that they are willing to spend time and money on media campaigns to combat criticism of their use of migrant labour? To understand these groups' response to the many critiques that have been made against agricultural migrant labour, it is important to understand Canada's migrant labour programs as part of a complex system, with economic and sociological trends feeding into the demand for this workforce in Canadian agriculture and the creation of a seemingly endless pool of available workers in sending countries.

In this chapter, I present a literature review outlining my framework for analyzing Canada's agricultural migrant labour streams – and the growing numbers of workers they bring into the country – through Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration. My framework explains the perpetual growth in employers' demand for migrant farmworkers because of labour market segmentation devaluing many agri-food jobs in the Canadian labour market, while the resulting workforce gap is filled with a virtually inexhaustible pool of reserve labour from the Global South where traditional rural economies have been disrupted by globalization and neoliberal policy reforms. I use this framework to contextualize the industry-generated discourse by identifying the underlying causes of both the agri-food sector's

dependence on migrant labour and workers' exploitability as a precarious international workforce.

This literature review chapter is divided into six sections. Section 2.1 describes the creation and expansion of Canada's agricultural migrant labour systems, starting with the earliest calls for access to migrant labour sources to fill shortages in the agri-food industry in the mid-twentieth century and tracing the growth of programs to meet these demands up until the present day. In doing so, I explain how the agri-food streams of the TFWP have grown at a rate seemingly disconnected from other trends in the Canadian labour market, including through periods of widespread unemployment such as the 2008 recession and the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The relentless growth in migrant farm workers, I argue, demonstrates an apparent disconnect between the implementation of migrant labour policies and their supposed purpose of addressing temporary labour shortages.

In Section 2.2, I present the academic consensus regarding the impacts of these programs on migrant farm workers. As I will explain, according to the literature on this subject, Canada's agricultural migrant labour system presents persistent issues such as exploitation of vulnerable workers by their employers, negative long-term health outcomes, negative social impacts on migrant workers and their families, and a long list of violations of workers' rights that are normally guaranteed in Canada. These negative outcomes are shown to result from structural elements of Canada's agricultural migrant labour programs, including policies that tie workers' permits to a single employer and limit their ability to seek alternative opportunities for themselves within the agri-food

industry, as well as the unusual degree of oversight that employers have over their non-working hours.

Having outlined the apparent contradictions within Canada's agricultural migrant labour system – that demand for it continues to expand in a manner seemingly disconnected from the broader Canadian labour market while the widespread violation of workers' rights has become increasingly apparent – I then begin outlining the framework I have developed to explain what fuels the system's continuous growth and agri-food industry groups' apparent interest in preserving it, starting in Section 2.3 with my discussion of Labour Market Segmentation Theory. Labour Market Segmentation Theory, I argue, provides the most compelling explanation of the long-term growth in demand for agricultural migrant labour. This theory presents how the labour market is hierarchically segmented, with higher-status 'skilled' workers being offered more compensation, prestige, and better working standards than lower-status 'unskilled' workers in a manner that is often disconnected from the value they produce, or the skills or difficulty involved in their work. Labour Market Segmentation Theory, I argue, explains the apparent disconnect between the demand for migrant farm workers and employment trends occurring within the broader Canadian labour market. Segmentation drives domestic workers from the potential agricultural labour pool, enabling and incentivizing employers to seek out migrant workers as a solution.

I continue to outline my framework for understanding the agricultural migrant labour system in Section 2.4, where I present another theory, the New Economics of Labour Migration. This theory explains the seemingly endless supply of migrant workers

in sending countries, a necessary input for the entire system to function. The New Economics of Labour Migration, as I will explain, contextualizes the decision to migrate for work within household-level financial management. Families make the determination of whether the absence of a family member – and the ensuing temporary loss of familial relationships, labour, and local revenue streams – is outweighed by the usually much higher income that can be earned abroad and invested into the household through remittances. I will demonstrate that the value, or even necessity, of remittance flows for sustaining quality of life and investments in the household's future is often enough to deter migrant workers from asserting their rights, seeking better conditions, or generally doing anything that might increase the risk of their employer firing them, which would usually deprive them of the ability to work in Canada. To further contextualize the financial choices facing migrant workers and their families, I will explore the legacy of neoliberal policy reforms imposed in Mexico, the largest source country of migrant workers to Canada – in large part at the encouragement of wealthier, migrant-receiving countries like the United States and Canada – and how these policies have driven economically disadvantaged, rural families to seek migrant labour as an income stream for lack of alternative options.

I will turn my attention in Section 2.5 to the various actors that populate this agricultural migrant labour system. I will describe the different ways that policy makers, academia, advocacy groups, workers, and agri-food industry groups have engaged with these issues to give context for the materials in my discourse analysis, including potential motivations for engaging in public discourse.

Section 2.6 builds on the previous sections to explain the interconnection of Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration into a framework for understanding temporary agricultural labour migration in Canada as a complete system. These two theories combine to explain the growth in the supply of and demand for agri-food migrant labour fueling the expansion of the TFWP. They show how the societal trend towards labour market segmentation in Canada drives down the domestic workforce's interest in agri-food jobs, creating an incentive and justification for employers to seek access to international workers, whose limited employment rights and financial obligation to families in their home countries make them willing to accept jobs and conditions that domestic workers would not. This framework explains both employers' and migrant workers' motivations for participating in the TFWP, providing the necessary theoretical basis for my critical discourse analysis. An understanding of the motivations driving industry actors (particularly employers) and migrant workers, as well as the power dynamics dictating the terms of this discourse, is necessary to begin analyzing the arguments, claims, and ideas presented in *More than a Migrant Worker*.

2.1 The Formation, Expansion, and Resilience of Agricultural Migrant Labour Systems

In the years following the end of World War II, temporary labour migration programs sprung up in countries across Europe and North America. Facing a growing demand for manual labour and a diminished workforce after the war, countries such as West Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (UK) began experimenting with temporary labour migration to meet the demands of employers in industries such as agriculture and construction (Menz, 2008). For example, West Germany made heavy

use of migrant labour through its *Gastarbeiter* programs (Ellerman, 2014). Around this same time the United States started its *Bracero* program, which brought workers from Mexico to American farms (Morgan, 2004). The managed migration programs of this era had several things in common. They were employer-driven, responding to lobbying from nonstate actors such as industry groups who pushed for access to migrant labour (Menz, 2008). They recruited workers from nearby countries with lower levels of economic development than the receiving countries, particularly those of Southern Europe in the case of Germany (Ellerman, 2014), Central and Eastern Europe in that of the UK (McDowell, 2008), and Mexico in that of the United States (Morgan, 2004). This early surge of interest in managed migration policy ultimately dissipated and nearly all these programs were terminated over the next few decades. Germany ended the last of its *Gastarbeiter* programs in 1973 (Ellerman, 2014), the *Bracero* program was dissolved in the US in 1964 (Morgan, 2004), and most of the other programs of this era had disappeared by around 1974 (Castles, 2006). The downfall of these early managed migration programs, according to Ellerman (2014), was primarily due to a failure to ensure the return of migrant workers to their home countries at the end of their intended period of employment. In Germany, for example, many guest-workers of this era brought families with them and settled permanently, a reality that these programs did not have policy mechanisms to prevent (Ellerman, 2014).

As a notable exception, Canada's SAWP emerged towards the end of this period in 1966 and has continued into the present day (Binford, 2019). At a time when most Western European and North American countries were giving up on managed migration, Canada started a program that would come to be seen as a model to be

replicated in other jurisdictions. In the 1990s and 2000s, as interest in managed migration began to grow once again in many of the same countries – as before, at the instigation of industry groups citing skill shortages or mismatches between their needs and the domestic workforce (Menz, 2008) – the SAWP was praised in international policy circles and at international migration policy events for its success in providing labour for the agricultural sector and ensuring the return of migrants to their home countries at the end of their contract each year (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012). The SAWP had achieved what other programs from the first generation of managed migration strived for but mostly failed at. As will be explained further in subsequent sections of this dissertation, it did so through restrictions on migrants' rights such as family reunification and freedom of employment, measures used to encourage workers' compliance with the program's objectives of providing labour for the agricultural sector and generating circular migration flows (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012). While these aspects of the program are often what attracts the most critical attention in academic and advocacy circles (more on that below) they are a central part of its appeal for policy makers seeking to grow the labour pool without affecting the number of new permanent residents.

The perceived success of the SAWP and its recognition as a best practice in managed migration has had effects beyond Canada's borders. While most earlier examples of managed migration programs had disappeared by the 1970s, the literature describes a resurgence in interest in this area of policy starting in the 1990s, often in the same countries that had disbanded their programs some decades past (Menz, 2008). Countries across the European Union re-established managed migration programs

during this period (Castles, 2006). Additionally, several countries began to explore managed migration for the first time, including New Zealand and Australia, again in response to demands from employers for migrant workers to fill persistent labour shortages (Bedford et al., 2017). Unlike their predecessors, programs in this second generation were mostly designed to prevent overstaying of migrants through further limitations on their rights, much like the SAWP. Menz (2008) writes that while the first generation of managed migration programs was perceived as a liberalization of international migration policy, this second generation can more accurately be characterized as a tightening of government control over immigration, as states sought to prescribe the exact conditions under which migrants can reside and work within their borders.

This brief overview of the history of managed migration illustrates how this aspect of the labour market has not just expanded within individual countries but also spread between them over the past several decades. Neoclassical economic theory has struggled to explain this growth in temporary labour migration, which appears increasingly untethered from variables that would be expected to have an impact, including the availability of domestic workers (Bauder, 2006).

Neoclassical macroeconomic migration theory presents international migration as a function of “geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labor” (Massey et al., 1993, p. 433). Neoclassical theorists such as Arthur Lewis (1954), describe how “an unlimited supply of labour may be said to exist in those countries where population is so large relatively to capital and natural resources, that there are large sectors of the

economy where the marginal productivity of labour is negligible, zero, or even negative (p. 141). According to this conceptualization, migration allows for labour and capital to be exchanged between countries until they reach equilibrium, although there is debate among neoclassical migration theorists about whether the benefits of migration occur in both sending and receiving countries or primarily receiving countries (Lewis, 1954).

Canadian immigration policy is closely aligned with neoclassical theory. It is common to hear policy makers discussing immigration in relation to economic priorities. A news release to announce Canada's 2024-26 Immigration Levels Plan highlights "a continued long-term focus on economic growth, with over 60 per cent of permanent resident admissions dedicated to the economic class by 2025", which is emphasized above the country's humanitarian and cultural objectives for immigration (IRCC, 2023). A commitment to immigration as an economic growth strategy has generally enjoyed support from Canadian politicians across the political spectrum. While escalated numbers of newcomers arriving to Canada became a major political liability for the governing Liberal Party under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2023 and 2024, opposition leader Pierre Poilievre did not commit to a notably different position on immigration during these years, though at times he made vague promises to improve its economic impact, such as to "make sure that it's easier for employers to fill genuine job vacancies they cannot fill." (The Canadian Press, 2023). During this period, Poilievre mostly avoided setting a firm target by which to reduce the number of newcomers, instead proposing ideas such as tying immigration targets to the rate of housing starts (Platt, 2024) or demanding that the Trudeau government re-impose tourist visa requirements on Mexican citizens (McDonald, 2024). Since Poilievre's loss to Trudeau's

successor, Mark Carney, in the 2025 federal election, the Conservative leader has called for the abolition of the TFWP (Zimonjic, 2025). Poilievre's stated reasons for taking this position included both rising youth unemployment and the exploitability of migrant workers, but he made an exception for what he called "legitimately difficult-to-fill agricultural labour", indicating that he would keep a stream specific to the agri-food sector (Rana, 2025). While the Carney government has indicated the TFWP will be reviewed, aiming for a "focused approach that targets specific, strategic sectors, and needs in specific regions", they have not yet indicated an interest in structural reform or a large-scale reduction of migrant labour (Shank, 2025). The stated positions of these political leaders present immigration and temporary migrant labour as primarily economic issues and center economic outcomes, including matching the workforce to the demands of employers. This framing further cements neoclassical theory as the predominant model for discussing Canadian migration policy.

The neoclassical conceptualization of immigration policy in Canada has guided policy decisions related to the TFWP. To give a recent example, following the release of UN Special Rapporteur Tomoya Obokata's report on the TFWP in July 2024, which detailed concerns that the power dynamic between migrant workers and employers could risk modern forms of slavery (Obakata, 2024), federal Immigration Minister Mark Miller acknowledged that abuse in the program persisted and that changes were necessary, but that the government was moving carefully on the issue to avoid putting inflationary pressure on food prices (Murray, 2024). Underlying this response are two rather illustrative assumptions, the first being that human rights and worker protections are somehow a risk to economic stability, the second being that the latter concern must

take precedence over the former. It would seem, therefore, that at least in policy-making circles, immigration, and particularly migrant labour, is seen as an economic issue, and the rational self-interest of immigrant-receiving countries as the driving force behind immigration policy.

While Massey et al. (1993) point to the simplicity of the neoclassical model as an element of its appeal and the reason it has had such an impact on public thinking and immigration policy, neoclassical migration theory presents some limitations, most notably through its exclusive focus on international wage differences as the cause of migration at the expense of other factors that may affect a prospective migrant's decision-making. Migrants, viewed through a neoclassical lens as rational, self-interested individuals, make decisions based on their potential earnings in home and destination countries and the material cost of migration to decide whether it is advantageous to work in another country (Massey, et al., 1993).

My framework for understanding agricultural migrant labour starts from an assessment that neoclassical economic theory does not adequately explain this phenomenon and therefore alternative theories are needed. I base this argument primarily on evidence that the predictions of neoclassical theory have not been borne out in real-world events. Neoclassical economic theory suggests that migration flows should respond to changes in the supply of labour in the receiving country. As I will explain, such changes appear to have little effect on migration flows, at least in the case of temporary agricultural labour in Canada.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides an illustrative example. Early in the pandemic there were large-scale layoffs across Canada as public health restrictions forced multiple sectors to greatly reduce their activity. Employment rates dropped sharply in the first two months of the pandemic, with monthly changes of -5.3 per cent and -11 per cent in March and April 2020, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2022), as vast numbers of businesses paused or reduced their activities in response to public health restrictions and changes in demand. Simultaneously, border restrictions that temporarily barred most people from entering Canada and a drastic reduction in international flights caused severe delays in the arrival of migrant workers on Canadian farms at a time when thousands were expected to begin their contracts. Despite the surplus of available domestic labour from layoffs in other industries, however, the agri-food industry's demand for migrant labour did not appear to change. The Canadian government modified its entry policies to allow migrant workers to get into the country (Dubinski, 2020), thereby limiting the slump in migration through the primary agriculture streams of the TFWP to March and April 2020.

As Weiler and Grez (2022) explain, border policy changes to allow migrant farm workers into Canada came about at least partly in response to a concerted effort by agri-food industry lobbyists to frame this issue, both for policy makers and the public, as primarily one of food security. The exceptions made in this case, they argue, fit into a longstanding narrative of exceptionalism surrounding the agri-food industry which often excuses its labour practices (and privileged access to migrant workers) as necessary for the public interest. The benefits of this exceptionalism to private capital, meanwhile, are rarely mentioned (Weiler & Grez, 2022). This work builds on earlier literature arguing

that agri-food industry groups have promoted an idea of “agrarian exceptionalism” (Weiler et al, 2017, p. 51) to justify and build public support for industry-friendly labour policies such as the TFWP, often based on agriculture’s essential role in Canadian food systems.

These measures appear to have prevented the pandemic from having much of an impact on the number of migrant farm workers arriving to Canada during the pandemic. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data presenting the number of workers in the TFWP agricultural streams show only a small decrease in arrivals in 2020, the year when travel was most impacted by the pandemic (Canada, Government of, 2024). As seen in Figure 1, the number of migrant workers entering through one of these streams in 2020 dropped to 52,830, a decrease from 57,450 in 2019 but nearly meeting the 53,715 that arrived in 2018. In 2021, growth in the overall number of agricultural migrant workers resumed, rising to 61,725. Figure 1 also shows that the decrease in 2020 occurred mostly in the first two quarters. Monthly data gives us a clearer picture of where the slight drop in agricultural migrant workers in 2020 occurred. Figure 2 shows that March 2020 saw substantially fewer migrant workers arriving than in the same month of previous years: down to 3,055 from 5,840 in March 2019 and 6,180 in March 2018. In the following three months, the inflow of migrant workers mostly recovered but remained slightly behind the same figures from 2019. These figures suggest that the closing of the border, initially without an exception for migrant farm workers, as well as other disruptions to the travel industry in March 2020, temporarily prevented workers from reaching their places of employment, but also that employers’ demand for these workers remained high and subsequent steps taken by

policy makers allowed this migration flow to resume relatively quickly. This event diverges from the expectations of neoclassical theory. Though, as described above, much of the Canadian labour market was experiencing a spike in unemployed workers, the flow of migration was maintained, both through employers' demand and the state's direct facilitation.

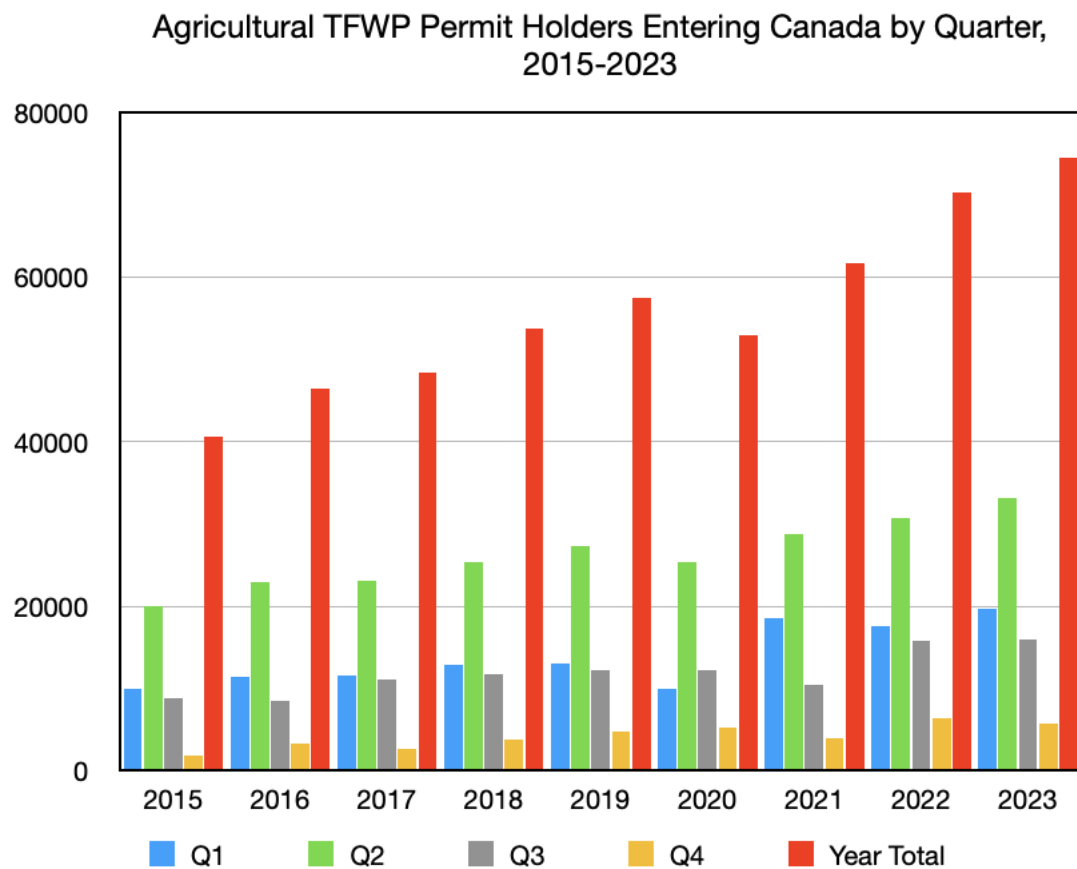


Figure 1: Quarterly Agricultural TFW Permit Holders in Agriculture, 2015-2023 (Government of Canada, 2024)

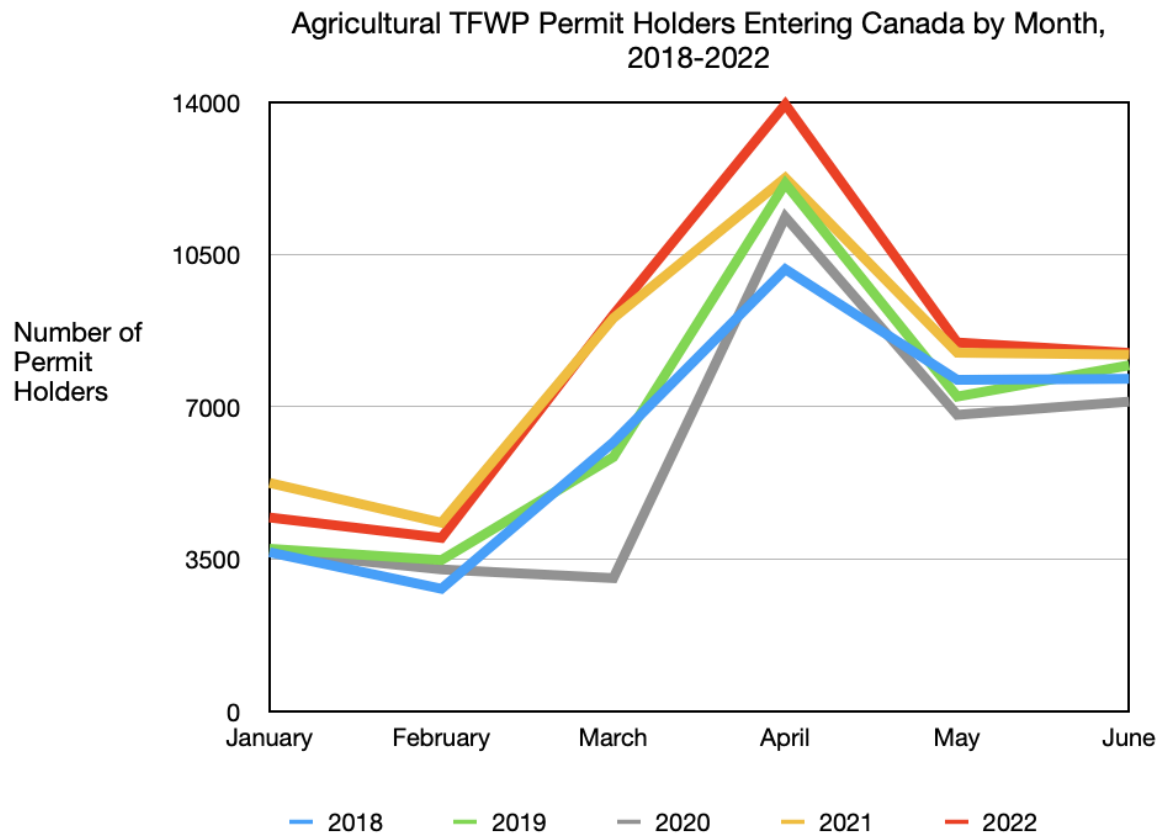


Figure 2: Agricultural TFW Permit Holders, January-June, 2018-2022 (Government of Canada, 2024)

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the first time there has been an apparent contradiction between Canadian migrant labour programs' supposed purpose and the actual conditions of the Canadian labour market. Foster (2012) tracks the growth of the TFWP during the 2000s, a decade in which the number of migrant workers entering through this program increased rapidly, including but not limited to its agricultural streams. This decade also was shaped, in its later years, by the 2008 financial crisis and resulting recession and high unemployment. Foster argues that since the expansion of the TFWP prior to this crisis was justified by labour shortages in a period of low unemployment, it could have been expected to shrink dramatically or even

disappear in the period of high unemployment that arose from 2008 to 2010. While growth in the number of migrant workers coming to Canada through the TFWP did slow during the recession in some hard-hit industries such as construction, demand in others remained high, showing an entrenchment of employers' reliance on migrant labour that was not diminished by this dramatic change in the domestic labour market (Foster, 2012). While Foster's (2012) analysis looks at the entire TFWP, rather than its agricultural streams specifically, the implication that migrant labour policy responds more to businesses' employment strategies rather than the actual availability of domestic workers to fill vacancies reinforces my position that migrant labour cannot be understood as a simple issue of labour supply and demand.

There appears to be a contradiction between the TFWP's continued growth during times of high unemployment and the Canadian government's messaging and policies. Before employers can hire migrant workers through the TFWP they must undergo a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA), which requires them to demonstrate that they have advertised the position publicly and been unable to find qualified local workers. This is one way in which the TFWP appears to be designed around neoclassical economic migration theory, under the assumption that labour shortages in agriculture are the result of a mismatch in the availability of capital and labour. During times of labour scarcity, the TFWP would be expected to grow as employers rely more heavily on it for lack of available local workers, while times of surplus labour, such as the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, would cause demand for migrant labour to contract. We should have therefore seen a reduction in the number of migrant workers entering Canada through the primary agriculture streams

of the TFWP in 2020, though, as explained above, what little reduction there was only lasted about two months, coinciding with the imposition of travel restrictions and the slowdown of the air travel industry. Of course, these events are likely too limited in terms of time and unusual circumstances to discredit neoclassical macroeconomic migration theory on their own. The unconventional reasons behind the economic slowdown instigated by the pandemic make this situation somewhat difficult to draw conclusions from. However, when considering the impact of workforce disruptions due to the pandemic in combination with the data presented by Foster (2012) about the years following the 2008 recession, I consider it noteworthy that arguably the two largest labour market upheavals to affect Canada in the twenty-first century so far have had a negligible impact on the demand for migrant labour in agriculture. Taken together, these events indicate that the agricultural sector's dependence on migrant labour is persistent and largely independent of other employment trends.

The agricultural streams of the TFWP have grown and expanded over the past five decades. In 1966, the inaugural year of the SAWP, 264 Jamaican migrant workers arrived in Canada (Binford, 2013). Since then, with the addition of new streams and partnerships and the steady growth in the number of work permits, the annual intake of migrant workers across all agricultural streams of the TFWP (including the SAWP) has increased to 68,803 annually, averaged over the years from 2021-2023 (Government of Canada, 2024). As Foster (2012) points out, such growth belies the supposedly 'temporary' intent of this program. A labour market forecast released by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), predicts that reliance on migrant labour in the sector will only continue to increase throughout the current decade,

anticipating that domestic labour shortfalls will grow from 69,000 in 2017 to 123,000 by 2029 (CAHRC, 2019). This level of sustained demand indicates that migrant labour has become and will continue to be an integral part of the agricultural workforce in Canada, one that policy makers and employers depend on and plan to maintain.

2.2 Academic Discourse on Migrant Labour Practices in Agriculture

While Canada's managed migration system under the TFWP has been embraced by many agri-food employers and industry groups, the past several decades of academic literature on the TFWP and SAWP present serious problems in Canada's migrant labour policies. Decades of peer-reviewed journal articles and books have provided numerous critiques and a growing pool of data indicating that these programs that have become so central to Canada's agricultural workforce are flawed when considering workers' rights, public health, and gender and racial equity (Caxaj et al., 2022; Colindres et al., 2021; Mayell 2024; Otero & Preibisch, 2016; Sarapura et al., 2023). In this section I will provide an overview of the many critiques of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system.

A central element of most of these critiques cuts to the very core of the TFWP model itself: a policy structure that appears designed to serve the needs of employers in the receiving country rather than those of migrant workers. One of the most cited examples of this critique can be found in Hennebry and Preibisch's 2012 paper "A model for managed migration? Re-examining best practices in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program". Despite being over a decade old, this paper continues to provide an excellent framework for understanding the academic critiques of Canadian

migrant labour policy and, as such, a good starting point for this section of the literature review. Hennebry and Preibisch (2012) question the SAWP's reputation in international policy circles as a best practice, which, as explained in the previous section, stems primarily from its success in providing a reliable workforce for the agri-food sector and ensuring migrant workers return to their home countries upon the ends of their contracts. As the article points out, this reputation has led to considerable interest in replicating Canada's model abroad. Hennebry and Preibisch demonstrate, however, that the SAWP presents issues when examined against a migrant rights-based framework, in their case a combination of best practices criteria established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s International Migration Best Practices Project (UNESCO, 2006), the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (ILO, 2005), the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Best Practices Concerning Migrant Workers and their Families (IOM, 2000), and the works of migration scholars such as Abella (2006), Hugo (2008), and Bendixsen and de Guchteneire (2003). According to Hennebry and Preibisch's analysis, the SAWP falls short on many important metrics. Among these failures are a lack of "proper management of labour demand" (p. 28), "protection of the rights of migrant workers" (p. 30), and "allowing for the change of employers" (p. 32), themes I have highlighted due to their frequent recurrence elsewhere in the literature, as I will demonstrate.

In terms of the management of labour demand, Hennebry and Preibisch (2012) argue that a best practice in migrant labour policy should combine "long-term supply deficit forecasts with practical methods for responding to current demands of industry"

(p. 28). The SAWP, they argue, does not meet this criterion given that its growth has been mostly employer-driven, a point I also covered in the previous section. Hennebry and Preibisch cite the lack of caps on the number of permits granted, the minimal requirements for employers to advertise a position locally, and the ever-increasing number of applications by employers to access the program in the years preceding the study, a trend which, as I already explained, has held true to the present day.

Other scholars have echoed Hennebry and Preibisch's assertion that Canada's agricultural migrant labour programs are employer-driven. A PhD dissertation by Christopher Miller (2018), for example, traces a trend of privatization of migration controls under Canada's migrant labour programs which has occurred across the 2000s, partially through the integration of industry groups into the administration of the TFWP. Miller argues this has been achieved through the advocacy of industry groups and their role in processing employers' applications, arranging travel for workers, and advocating for the continued expansion of programs. In fact, Miller claims that this push towards privatization perhaps ended up triggering the creation of the Agricultural Stream of the TFWP in the 2010s as a way for the federal government to re-upload some of these responsibilities. Beckford (2016), similarly asserts that the steady growth in the number of agricultural migrant workers can be attributed to the lack of firm quotas, allowing employers to successfully request ever-increasing numbers.

Hennebry and Preibisch's (2012) assertion that the SAWP and TFWP fail to protect migrants' rights align with a well-established theme in the literature. An earlier source that also remains relevant on this subject is Tanya Basok's 2002 book, *Tortillas*

and Tomatoes: Transmigrant Mexican Harvesters in Canada. Basok (2002) describes migrant farmworkers' exposure to dangerous work conditions, including the use of hazardous pesticides without appropriate training or protective equipment, the barriers they experience in attempting to access services they are entitled to such as healthcare, and the potential for employers to exploit their vulnerable migration status in order to demand work that is not legally compliant, offer substandard living conditions, and disrupt attempts by workers to organize.

Basok's account has been echoed by others with similar findings up to the present day. Further studies have exposed health and safety risks migrant workers face in Canada and the associated consequences, including chronic illness, injury, and even death (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019; Caxaj et al, 2020; Hennebry et al., 2016). Migrant workers frequently feel compelled to accept arduous and dangerous work conditions over unusually long hours, the result of the agri-food industry's relatively relaxed health and safety regulations and migrant workers' precarious status (Beckford, 2016; George & Borrelli, 2023; Grez, 2022). These risks are further compounded by the inadequate access to medical care experienced by many migrant workers, stemming largely from language barriers, scarcity of medical professionals in the areas where they work, and limited opportunities to get to a doctor's office (Barnetson et al, 2020; Caxaj et al, 2020; Colindres et al, 2021).

Upon completion of their workday, migrant farm workers typically return to the accommodations provided by their employers, which in some cases have been characterized as overcrowded, inadequately furnished, and unsanitary (Caxaj et al,

2024; Vosko et al., 2022). In a study I completed for my MSc thesis in Rural Planning and Development, migrant workers spoke of the exhaustion that accumulates after working long days of manual labour and having nowhere to rest and recover due to the discomfort and crowdedness of their living conditions (Helps, 2020). Mayell (2024) reports that migrant workers display forms of psychological distress stemming from the inadequacy of their housing in Canada. Unsafe housing conditions became particularly significant during the pandemic, as the novel coronavirus spread rapidly across entire workforces during the summer of 2020, facilitated by the impossibility of social distancing in many workers' bunkhouses (Caxaj et al, 2022; Haley et al., 2020). In addition to the negative health impacts, when workers reside on the farm property, it provides employers with an unusual degree of oversight and access to migrant workers outside of their working hours, with some workers describing controlling behaviour such as employers expecting workers to be available at all times and conducting random roll calls, conditions some compared to a prison (Hjalmarson, 2021).

Another element of the migrant worker experience made more obvious by the pandemic was the social isolation that many experience while in Canada, already a concern due to their distance from loved ones but made all the worse during the pandemic when some employers were reported to have illegally prohibited migrant workers from leaving the farm property (Barnetson et al, 2020; Vosko et al., 2022; Weiler & Grez, 2022). Horgan and Liinamaa (2017) explain how even in a pre-pandemic context, the on-farm location of much migrant worker housing placed constraints on options for migrant workers to socialize within the community during their stays, often due to rural location, lack of transport to populated areas, and the poor quality of their

housing making it difficult to host guests. Practical and financial barriers to car ownership while in Canada mean that for most migrant farm workers the only independent means of travel besides walking is to ride a bicycle, an option which comes with safety risks and further demonstrates migrant workers' marginalization in largely car-dependent rural communities (Reid-Musson, 2018). While migrant workers' living arrangements limit their off-farm movements, Perry (2018) further argues that the dormitory-style nature of most migrant worker housing leads to a reduced quality of socialization between workers living alongside each other and produces self-policing behaviour from workers who feel like they are always being watched. It has also been found that, at least in some cases, the high degree of control that on-farm housing grants employers over workers was exploited early in the pandemic to further restrict their already constrained movements (Weiler & Grez, 2022). While these restrictions may have been an overbearing response to the unusual circumstances of a new and dangerous transmissible disease, it aligns with previous research showing that on-farm accommodations can lead workers to experience isolation and negative mental health impacts and provide the opportunity for employers to exploit workers' vulnerability if they choose to (Helps, 2020).

The social isolation that migrant farm workers experience while living on Canadian farms is compounded by separation from family in their home countries. As mentioned above, one of the SAWP's key innovations over earlier managed migration programs was its restriction on family reunification during migrant workers' stays, with workers in Canadian agriculture under the TFWP streams generally not being offered the opportunity for family members to accompany them to live and work in Canada.

Nakache (2018) notes that the rights of families to remain together is an established principle under international law, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and associated case law, a contradiction that becomes even more apparent as “the distinction between ‘temporary’ and ‘permanent’ migration is increasingly blurry” (p. 228). McLaughlin et al. (2018) have presented the profound impact the loss of a parent to Canada’s agricultural migration streams for months at a time can have on the development of children and on family cohesion. Children’s academic performance and health are shown to suffer while workers’ distance and absence from parental duties can create difficulties in spousal relationships (McLaughlin et al., 2018). Basok and George (2020) find that the absence of workers’ families contributes to their sense of non-belonging in the communities where they live and work in Canada.

Abuses of migrant workers’ rights have been linked to another of Hennebry and Preibisch’s (2012) criticisms of the SAWP: that migrant workers’ permission to stay and work in Canada depends on their continued employment with a single employer, creating an unusual imbalance of power in the workplace. Workers have little control over where they work, being assigned to an employer for the length of their contract through the bureaucracy of the program’s administration. Employers, meanwhile, are offered a high degree of choice, being able to request workers from a specific country and, until a 2014 legal challenge by the United Food and Commercial Workers’ Union, of a particular gender, though there is some evidence that informal hiring discrimination based on gender still exists through relationships between employers and recruiters (Sarapura et al., 2023). While workers do have the ability to request a transfer to a different workplace during their stay, the success of these transfers is dependent on the

agreement of the program's administrative bodies. A 2019 policy change established an open work permit for workers who can demonstrate they are vulnerable to abuse by their employers (Government of Canada, 2024). However, this falls short of simply allowing all workers to freely choose from amongst eligible employers, as it is only available upon complaint, a barrier which inhibits many workers from making use of this option for fear of retaliation from their employer (Sarapura et al., 2023). Given that workers cannot stay and work in Canada if their assigned employment should end, Hennebry and Preibisch (2012) argue, they face strong structural disincentives against asserting their rights or pushing back on the demands of their employer in any way, lest they be fired, a concern that may discourage them from speaking up, even with the possibility of being offered an open work permit. As researchers have argued, the TFWP's complaints-driven approach to protecting migrant farmworkers from exploitation and abuse does not address the strong disincentives to making a complaint created by the power imbalances between worker and employer (Barnetson et al, 2020; Caxaj & Cohen, 2021; Nakache, 2013).

Other researchers have similarly critiqued the structure and power dynamics of the TFWP by exploring the intersection of precarious labour and migration status. Landolt and Goldring (2013) define precarious labour as “a job that is unstable and insecure, offers limited rights, protections, and benefits to workers, allows workers little control over their schedules, and gives workers little say in decisions of how work will be done” (p. 157). While non-citizenship is not a prerequisite for precarious labour, the former creates the conditions for the latter, as difficulty in navigating their migration status makes workers less likely to challenge their employers and therefore more vulnerable to

exploitation (Landolt & Goldring, 2013). Cohen (2019) argues that such precarity is constructed through the policies of circular migration programs like the TFWP, as workers' deportability and interchangeability under the terms of the program make them insecure in their migration status much like undocumented workers. McLaughlin and Hennerby (2013) further demonstrate the connection between migration status and precarious labour, pointing out that migrant workers display many of the signs of precarity, including lack of certainty over continued employment, limited control over their work conditions, limited labour protections, and low income. These vulnerabilities are built into the terms of Canada's migrant labour streams and the associated regulatory framework. Basok et al. (2022) argue that the standard contract for workers in the SAWP, which is negotiated between Canada and the governments of sending countries, constrains the movements of workers by tying them to a single employer while offering no effective safeguards against wrongful dismissal and repatriation or assurances of safe housing or access to services such as healthcare. Furthermore, in the agri-food industry, migrant workers join an already precarious workforce due to carveouts of workers' rights laws for farmworkers in provinces such as British Columbia and Ontario, including collective bargaining protections (Basok et al., 2022).

Researchers have found this structural inequality to constrain not only the movements of migrant farm workers, but also their behaviours while in Canada. Basok and Belanger (2016) have explained that, despite deportations of migrant farm workers being relatively uncommon, the threat of dismissal and repatriation can be enough to lead to self-disciplining and self-exploiting behaviour. Such behaviours include competing with other workers to be perceived as hard-working, working overtime to

meet their employers' demands, and monitoring and reporting on the productivity of coworkers (Basok & Belanger, 2016). The vulnerability of migrant farm workers relative to their employers – demonstrated most effectively through the rarely used ability to end their employment in Canada – therefore exists whether employers intentionally exploit this dynamic or not, as migrant workers are acutely aware of their precarity.

The argument that the structural power imbalance inherent to the relationship between employer and worker under the TFWP leads to negative consequences for workers' rights appears repeatedly throughout the literature. Perhaps the most well understood of these consequences are the negative impacts on workers' health and safety. Landry et al. (2021) explain how employers are involved in every aspect of migrant workers' access to healthcare, including taking them to get their provincial health cards and driving them to medical appointments. This unusual level of involvement provides employers with knowledge of workers' personal health that would not be considered appropriate in many other workplaces. It also provides them with the ability to control access to healthcare, a dynamic which played out to notable effect during the pandemic, as some employers dissuaded workers from reporting illness for fear of disruptions to productivity (Landry et al., 2021). Vosko and Spring (2021) further link the rapid spread of COVID-19 infections on Canadian farms employing migrant workers to precarious migration status and the various adverse conditions they frequently experience, including overcrowded, dilapidated housing without adequate sanitation or room for social distancing. These conclusions are further supported by Caxaj et al. (2022) and Weiler and Grez (2022).

Other elements of the TFWP's policy structure deepen the power imbalance between employer and worker and create inequalities throughout much of the Canadian agricultural workforce across intersections between migration status, race, nationality, and gender. Migrant workers now comprise a substantial portion of Canada's agricultural workforce, but they are still a minority, working alongside both Canadian-born and immigrant workers with citizenship or permanent residence status. This mixed pool of permanent and temporary farm workers has been shown to weaken the strength of labour's position relative to the employer. Employers benefit from the competition between these groups, using the prospect of being replaced by migrant labour as a threat against workers with permanent status and vice-versa, increasing the precariousness of the overall agricultural workforce (Jubany & Lázaro Castellanos, 2021). Between these groups, however, migrant workers are clearly the more precarious, given their inability to seek job security with another employer.

Employers can also take advantage of options built into the administration of the TFWP, which allow them to request workers of a particular national origin. Again, the literature shows how employers have used these options to their advantage, amplifying rivalries between different nationalities and threatening to hire workers from a different country the following year if workers do not adequately submit to their demands (Otero & Preibisch, 2016). Employers have shown preference for migrants of one national background or another, expressing at times that workers from some countries work harder or are less likely to complain about work conditions (Basok, 2002).

This division of the workforce into national identity groups is inherently linked to race, and the racialization of migrant workers is a common element discussed in the literature. Workers in the SAWP, which is limited to 12 sending countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, are largely Black and/or Latinx, which can result in various racialized experiences while working in Canada. The mostly rural and small communities that they reside in during their stay are not commonly major destinations for immigration when compared to urban centres. Migrant workers have reported being harassed or subjected to racist incidents while interacting with community members, such as when accessing services or shopping in nearby town centres (George et al., 2024; Hjalmarson et al., 2015). In some cases, racist attitudes experienced by migrant workers include bullying and harassment from employers (Hjalmarson, 2021). Language barriers, cultural differences, and physical isolation of their housing further inhibit migrant workers from forming meaningful relationships within their host communities and feelings of isolation and alienation are common (Helps, 2020; Horgan & Liinamaa, 2017). Researchers have found that migrant farmworkers display low senses of attachment and belonging in the communities where they stay, despite often returning many years in a row (Basok & George, 2020). The distance, both metaphorical and often literal between migrant workers and the local population deprives them of a support network which might otherwise help offset the disproportionate control that employers have over their lives (George et al., 2024; Helps, 2020). The fact that migrant workers in Canadian agriculture are mostly racial, cultural, and linguistic minorities in the communities where they reside is therefore a contributing factor to their exploitability.

Gender is another important factor in the dynamics of agricultural migrant labour in Canada. As noted above, employers were able until several years ago to request workers by gender when applying for the TFWP or SAWP, and the vast majority of migrant workers in Canadian agriculture continue to be men, to the degree that some researchers have identified a gender blindness in much of the academic literature as the unique vulnerabilities of female migrant workers receive comparatively little attention (Sarapura et al., 2023). When farms do employ both male and female migrant workers it is common for men to reside on-site at the farm and women to reside at an off-site location such as in nearby apartments (Helps, 2020). Food production tasks also appear to be divided along gendered lines. While men are employed to work on all stages of production, women are often employed to perform post-cultivation processing tasks such as packaging of finished goods (Helps, 2020). This division of responsibilities not only reflects gendered assumptions about the suitability of men and women for different tasks but reinforces longstanding inequities in the industry.

Women who do enter the agri-food industry as migrant workers face an environment that is poorly suited to their needs or even outright hostile towards them. According to Cohen and Caxaj (2018), migrant women in Canadian agriculture face considerable barriers to accessing reproductive healthcare, due to a combination of limited availability of these services – a byproduct of the long hours of work and remoteness of many work locations – as well as policy structures that place outsized power in the hands of employers as described above. Living in employer-provided housing, migrant women are often subjected to considerable scrutiny and restrictions, particularly where socializing with men is concerned. Cohen and Caxaj (2018) also

describe barriers to migrant women reporting sexual harassment or assault, as they face pressure from their employers and their own governments to remain silent or else not be invited back for further employment in subsequent years of the program. The precarity of migrant farm workers' migration status and employment in Canada therefore takes on additional dimensions when it intersects with gender inequality.

There is a gap in the literature concerning the experiences of LGBTQ+ migrant workers on Canadian farms. In fact, I could not locate a single study to date that centered the experiences of migrant workers who identify as LGBTQ+ in Canadian agriculture, further evidence of a heteronormativity in the literature identified by Sarapura et al. (2023). This may stem from factors such as policies used in the selection of migrants – recruitment practices appear to favour prospective workers with spouses and dependent children (Sarapura et al., 2023) – and the heteronormativity of agriculture as a field, which has been found to place constraints on LGBTQ+ farmers' ability to be open about their identities (Hoffelmeyer, 2021). While LGBTQ+ migrants may be underrepresented in the SAWP and TFWP, this does not mean that they are absent or that the intersection of their LGBTQ+ identity with their migrant status does not add a dimension to their precarity. Rural communities in Canada have been shown to be less accepting of open expression of LGBTQ+ identities than urban centres (Henriquez & Ahmad, 2021). Further to the marginalization that they may face from the agri-food sector and rural communities in Canada, LGBTQ+ migrants may not feel free to express their identity even in their home communities. For example, researchers have highlighted the difficulty of measuring the size of the LGBTQ+ community in Mexico given the potentially high risk of homophobia (Gutierrez & Rubli, 2023). All these

factors would make it more difficult and potentially dangerous for LGBTQ+ migrant workers to speak out, perhaps further explaining their absence from the literature. While this paper is not an attempt to address this gap, it is a clear example of how there are still elements of the migrant farm worker experience in Canada that have yet to be studied in detail.

The academic literature summarized above presents a strong critique of Canada's agricultural migrant labour policies. Restrictions that limit migrants to a single workplace, as well as the isolation they experience living and working at food production sites in rural and remote locations, place disproportionate amounts of power in the hands of employers, often to the detriment of workers' health and labour rights. Workers' precarious migration status further intersects with markers of minority identities such as race, gender, and sexual orientation to create complex forms of marginalization.

As some researchers have noted, these problematic outcomes of Canada's managed migration policy clash with popularly held narratives about agricultural production, including those sometimes promoted by agri-food industry actors. Weiler et al. (2016), looking at migrant labour through the lens of Canadian sustainable food movements, explain how agri-food groups and producers invoke romanticized agrarian language and imagery to shape public perception of farmers as "inherently honest, politically stable, morally upright and independent" (p. 1143) thereby influencing public discourse in a way that excuses practices such as the use of migrant labour. The construction of this idealized image simultaneously excuses the use of migrant labour streams as necessary to preserve the family farm while dismissing cases of worker

exploitation as “bad apples” (p. 1150). Agri-food groups have promoted a family-based image of Canadian farms that often ignores the coercive control employers have over workers, who are sometimes framed as part of the ‘family’, using language of care to justify imposing forms of control over workers inside and outside of working hours (Reid-Musson, 2017). The alternative to this idealization of the employer-worker relationship is often erasure. Lozanski and Baumgartner (2022), looking at farm-to-table tourism in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, find that the globalized, racialized agri-food workforce found throughout this region belies the quaint, family-oriented, and predominantly white image presented to visitors. As I explain in the findings of my critical discourse analysis, *More than a Migrant Worker* continues to grapple with the inherent contradictions between the agrarian idyll and the reality of a vulnerable and precarious migrant workforce.

Given the critiques described above, it is important to understand the context that makes the Canadian agricultural sector so reliant on migrant labour in the first place. The next two sections will present theoretical explanations of both the demand for migrant labour in Canada and the supply of willing international workers in source countries across the Caribbean and Latin America. In doing so, I will begin to explain why this system has persisted despite the many flaws presented above and why various stakeholders – employers most of all – have pushed back against calls to reform or abolish it.

2.3 Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the Growing Demand for Migrant Farm Workers

As explained in the previous sections, managed migration has grown as a source of manual labour in many high-income countries in the past several decades. There is a particularly strong connection between temporary migrant labour and the agricultural sector, which seems to only grow stronger over time, regardless of fluctuations in the domestic labour supply or the many critiques directed at these practices, contradicting some of the assumptions of neoclassical economic models that I have argued are foundational to Canada's migrant labour policies. Alternative explanations for the growth in demand for agricultural migrant labour are therefore required.

CAHRC, a non-profit organization representing the workforce-related interests of employers, has put forth its own set of explanations for what it calls a "widening labour gap" between the sector's demand for labour and domestic supply (CAHRC, 2019, p. 14). CAHRC points out that the size of agricultural workforce required in Canada undergoes large seasonal fluctuations compared to other sectors, making it difficult to retain employees. Another factor CAHRC identifies is the rural location of many agricultural producers, as rural areas have not experienced the same levels of population growth or immigration as urban centres. It also claims that competition from other industries that offer higher wages, such as oil and gas, has drawn some workers away from agriculture. Finally, CAHRC identifies high voluntary turnover rates as a driver of labour shortages in the agricultural sector, despite its own survey results indicating what CAHRC considers to be high levels of job satisfaction (2019). The report argues that "these results suggest that the agriculture sector has essentially two types

of workers. The first is a core of engaged workers who enjoy what they do and tend to stay in the sector. The second comprises new workers who try working in agriculture but leave after a short period” (CAHRC, 2019, p. 13). CAHRC’s explanation of agricultural labour shortages appears to argue for the availability of migrant labour from a neoclassical economic perspective as described above, holding that employers struggle to hire workers because of factors largely beyond their control. Labour shortages, from this perspective, are the result of a mismatch between the availability of capital and that of labour, while migrant labour programs provide a solution through a mutually beneficial arrangement between countries with a deficit of labour like Canada and others that have a surplus.

Literature that looks past neoclassical economic theory gives us alternative explanations for why the Canadian government and agricultural employers have consistently turned towards migrant workers as a solution for labour shortages rather than attracting Canadian workers back to the sector. Some migration theory contradicts the logic behind migrant labour systems presented by the agri-food industry. For example, Massey et al. (1993) describe this system as “fill[ing] a demand for labor that is structurally built into modern, post-industrial economies” (p. 444). This would imply that labour migration is not the result of mismatches between the availability of capital and labour that will equalize over time but rather an intrinsic feature of the economies of countries like Canada. Being ‘structural’ in this case means that these economies are reliant upon this labour source and will continue to rely on it indefinitely.

Theorists critical of neoclassical economic theory regarding labour markets began to discuss the notion of a dual labour market in the 1970s, a prominent example being Beck et al. (1978), who presented evidence of differences in the workforce composition of core or primary and periphery or secondary industrial sectors and argued that earnings are in part structurally determined. Dual market theorists of this time characterized core industries as those dominated by large firms with a primarily skilled, high-wage, formalized workforce, such as construction or durable goods manufacturing, while periphery industries were characterized as predominantly made up of smaller firms with unskilled, low-wage, and often short-term workers, such as agriculture and retail (Dickens & Lang, 1992). The key innovation of dual market theory was to recognize that while most workers would prefer the core sector for the better security and pay that it generally offers, structural barriers exist such as social connections, prejudices, and corporate structure which make moving from the periphery to the core unlikely (Dickens & Lang, 1992).

Building on the work of dual labour market theorists, Labour Market Segmentation Theory has broadened inquiry into the different ways in which distinct labour markets are socially constructed. Seo (2021), for example, provides a framework with four labour market segments. These are categorized as 'Insiders' (those with standard employment arrangements, higher job security, and usually better wages) and three types of 'Outsiders': 'Typical Outsiders' (those with informal employment arrangements, little job security, and low wages), 'Dead-end Outsiders' (those lacking opportunities for career progression), and 'Subjective Outsiders' (those whose lived experiences cause them to perceive their position as precarious). The common element separating lower segments

of the labour market include precarious status, low pay, and limited career growth or training opportunities (Seo, 2021). Such elements can all be seen in many jobs throughout the agri-food sector, especially those commonly filled by migrant farm workers, which, as explained above, are predominantly seasonal, considered unskilled, and receive low pay relative to many jobs in other sectors of the Canadian economy.

Labour Market Segmentation Theory addresses some of the perceived shortcomings of neoclassical economic theory in explaining the persistence of poverty and wage inequality. Cain (1976), an early proponent of the theory, identifies how the imposition of credential requirements allows for hiring patterns that replicate patterns of social inequality by providing a rationale to distinguish between prospective employees based on educational attainment as a proxy for factors such as race or class. Grimshaw et al. (2017) describe how once created, segmented labour markets are self-reproducing, as employers' undermining of both workforce development and collective worker power results in increased stratification of the labour market, with those in lower-status segments blocked from higher-status segments by both social and practical barriers. There are noteworthy parallels between this description of the lower segments of the labour market and Hennebry & Preibisch's (2012) critique of the SAWP, which pointed out the lack of recognition of workers' skills and experience or opportunities for advancement. In this way, Canada's migrant labour policies could be seen as a kind of legally codified labour market segmentation, as migrant workers are formally bound to remain in low-wage, precarious jobs.

Labour Market Segmentation Theory further addresses the inability of neoclassical models to explain wage structures in relation to job-related risk, with Graham and Shakow (1990) identifying no relationship between job-related risk and compensation in secondary industrial sectors. Again, this holds true for migrant workers in the Canadian agri-food industry, who are exposed to considerable job-related risk including injury, death, or dismissal and repatriation, and yet often receive minimum wage or slightly higher (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019).

Segmented labour markets defy the rational choice-based economic models that form the basis for much of the current migration policy regime in countries like Canada as described in Section 2.1. As explained above, the neoclassical economic theory that underlies much of Canada's migration policy assumes that labour markets will behave rationally and that international labour should only be necessary where domestic workforces have been exhausted. Labour market segmentation, however, creates a potential disconnect between the difficulty of a job or the value it produces and the compensation and status afforded to the worker. Anthropologist David Graeber (2018) explores the apparent contradiction between the valuation of different types of labour and the supposedly rational basis of capitalism in relation to a phenomenon he refers to as 'bullshit jobs'. This is the term Graeber coins referring to meaningless and unproductive work within capitalist societies that are supposed to be structured around productivity and efficiency. Graeber points out that most of the jobs he describes as 'bullshit' are well-compensated and have barriers to entry such as credential requirements or a minimum degree of formal education, despite being considered by the very workers who fill them to be devoid of purpose and/or challenge. In fact, he goes

as far as to suggest that the value produced by a worker's labour and the amount they are likely to be paid are inversely related (Graeber, 2018). As Graeber explains, most people accept this ordering of the labour market tacitly, expecting those in such difficult and highly important jobs as nurses, cleaners, and farm workers to earn less than those in white collar positions like corporate executives and hedge fund managers, though they could more easily recognize the value created by the former category than the latter. Graeber's argument that wages are driven more by socially determined expectations than by a job's importance or the demand for workers to fill it supports the existence of a segmented labour market. Rational market forces are unlikely to result in an equilibrium between the supply of and demand for farm labour through improved compensation or working conditions because social convention dictates that these essential workers should earn less.

The result of this hierarchy is that most workers within the domestic workforce will aspire to move from lower-status segments of the labour market to those with higher status, not just for the higher pay and often better working conditions, but also for the social recognition that comes with a higher status position. The status assigned to different positions is often reflected in terms such as 'low-skilled' vs. 'highly-skilled', which do not necessarily reflect the actual difficulty or skill requirements of a job but rather the barriers to entry such as requisite education, experience, or social connections. Such language is woven into the immigration system itself. In Canada, for instance, there are different programs and streams for highly-skilled and low-skilled immigrants. As Bauder (2006) points out, countries generally provide far more privileges to groups of immigrants seen as highly-skilled, who tend to come overwhelmingly from

higher-income countries, offering them more freedom of employment and easier pathways to permanent residency. In fact, some 'low-skilled' immigration streams, such as the SAWP, have not historically provided temporary low-skilled migrants a clear pathway to permanent residency at all. The segmentation of the labour market is therefore evident in immigration policy, privileging the educated, 'highly-skilled' workers over their 'low-skilled' counterparts, regardless of how much benefit their labour brings to the receiving country.

If CAHRC's (2019) current and forecasted reports of dire labour shortages in the sector are correct, one might expect that immigrants with experience in agriculture would be provided a quick path to permanent residency as with other highly sought-after workers. There are, however, strategic reasons why the Canadian government has not yet made this the case. Firstly, as Massey et al. (1993) explain, temporary migrants have less of an interest in a job's status in the labour market hierarchy than domestic workers do. Since they only stay in the receiving country temporarily or seasonally and their family and social ties remain primarily in their home countries, the status conferred by their job is less relevant than other factors such as the potential to earn higher income to send home as remittances. In fact, the increased income from working abroad can improve their social standing in their home communities (Massey et al., 1993), meaning that unlike domestic workers who would potentially experience stigma from taking a position seen as low-skilled, migrant workers may enjoy an improved social status because of their employment in the Canadian agri-food industry. Receiving states may suppose, therefore, that if they were to offer migrant workers permanent residence, these workers would follow the domestic population in seeking out higher-

status positions within the segmented labour market, pursuing education and rejecting the less desired manual labour roles that they were originally recruited to fill.

Furthermore, states can use their control over migration to limit temporary migrants' work activities in ways that they cannot with permanent residents and citizens. Migrant workers in the TFWP are strictly limited to working for a single employer to which they are assigned, any changes needing to be approved by the Canadian government. As Hennebry & Preibisch (2012) explain, this limitation bars migrant workers from seeking alternate employment, causing many to tolerate working conditions that others would not, as their permission to stay and work in Canada (and therefore their ability to earn money to send to their families) is tied to continued employment with their assigned employer. Limiting workers to a single employer also reduces the possibility that they will stay in Canada beyond the length of their contract, as their status does not allow them to find further employment. Instead, they are expected to return to their home countries and apply for readmission to the SAWP the following year. The promise of future employment ensures that many workers will continue to return to the SAWP, working for the same employer. The limitations on migrant farm workers' access to employment contribute to two outcomes that have been key to the longevity of the SAWP and its many international imitations: first, it ensures that they will fill the positions required by agricultural employers, something that could not be guaranteed if they were granted open access to the Canadian labour market as permanent residents are. Secondly, it discourages any expectation of long-term settlement in Canada for these migrants, minimizing the obligations of governments and allowing them to save resources for other classes of immigrants (Hennebry & Preibisch,

2012). The restrictions placed on migrant workers' employment serve as a further demonstration of how the TFWP represents a legislated form of labour segmentation, which, as already explained involves the construction of barriers that sort workers into discreet labour markets with little opportunity for mobility between them (Grimshaw et al., 2017).

The temporary status of migrant farm workers makes them more willing to fill positions that domestic workers consider undesirable, as the lack of strong social ties or opportunities for career advancement in the receiving country reduce their interest in and ability to move into types of work with higher status in the segmented labour market. As Hennebry and Preibisch (2012) point out, restricting workers to a single, assigned workplace creates an unequal power dynamic between them and their employers as well as many opportunities for exploitation. This argument is supported throughout much of the literature, with other researchers pointing to migrant farm workers in Canada having disproportionately poor access to healthcare (McLaughlin & Tew, 2018), high instance of workplace injury and illness (McLaughlin et al., 2014) experiences of social isolation and racism (Binford, 2019; Smith, 2015), abuses of their rights (Otero & Preibisch, 2016), and severely limited personal autonomy and choice (Silverman & Hari, 2016), largely due to their precarious migration status. These issues were particularly apparent during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to high levels of illness and some deaths on farms, as the airborne virus spread easily through crowded employer-provided housing (Landry, et al., 2021). In fact, as Weiler and Grez (2022) argue, the Canadian government's rush to facilitate the arrival of migrant workers for the agri-food industry resulted in failures that contributed to the spread of COVID-19

among the migrant workforce, including by foregoing some oversight mechanisms such as on-site inspections. This rushed approach also further exacerbated issues such as poor housing quality and excessive employer control over workers' movements (Weiler & Grez, 2022). During this time there was also evidence of increased social isolation, as some employers illegally restricted migrant workers' movements, in some cases attempting to prevent them from leaving the farm properties where they work and reside (Kelley et al., 2020). The restriction of migrant workers to their assigned employer can therefore come at a cost to the wellbeing of workers themselves.

Such restrictions represent what Bauder (2017) describes as an extension of the state's control over its borders well beyond points of entry such as airports and land crossings. Bauder explains how, while national identity and migration status pose obstacles most obviously at the point of entry, they continue to follow migrants throughout their time in foreign territory, often limiting where they can legally live and work and what level of access they have to government services. Precarious migration status can prevent one from finding legal employment, switching workplaces, accessing necessary healthcare, or even reporting and seeking remedies to injustice, and carries the risk of consequences such as loss of employment and removal from the host country if migrants fail to comply with any expectations associated with their status under immigration laws. As Hennebry and Preibisch (2012) point out, tying migrant workers to a single employer is in direct contradiction to best practices in managed migration established by UNESCO's International Migration Best Practices Project (UNESCO, 2006). This limitation on migrants' rights is present in many other international examples of agricultural migrant worker programs (Ruhs & Martin, 2008),

including those of Spain (Briones-Vozmediano & González-González, 2022), Finland (Ollus, 2016), and Australia (Tham et al., 2017) all of which have been found to lead to abuse and exploitation of migrants. As the SAWP has developed a reputation with some international policy makers as a best practice to be emulated, in large part due to its success in ensuring that migrants fill the jobs to which they are assigned and return to their home countries at the end of their contracts (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012), it is no surprise that one of the features of this program that other countries are most interested in replicating is the one which allows greater control over migrant workers' movements. Precarity appears to be a built-in feature of the model of managed migration that many countries are now following to fill agricultural labour shortages.

Other literature suggests that the employment of migrant workers (and the policy restrictions placed upon them) is not simply a response to labour shortages in high income countries but rather an intrinsic feature of the globally dominant neoliberal economic model. In his book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey (2005) explains how the free movement of capital across borders is supported by neoliberal policy whereas the movement of people (and therefore labour) is far more restricted. Harvey claims that “the geographical mobility of capital permits it to dominate a global labour force whose own geographical mobility is constrained” (2005, pp. 168-169). He goes on to explain that the captive labour markets these restrictions create provide opportunities for the exploitation of labour, both through the illegalization of migrants who do not have permission from the state to work within its territory (and therefore do not have access to the same protections as workers who do have permission) and

through the creation of regulated temporary migration schemes where the worker's permission to stay is bound to their relationship with a single employer.

In this sense, migrant labour programs like the TFWP are made possible by the existence of a "global reserve army of labor" described by Foster and McChesney (2018, p. 485). Referencing Marx's theories on the accumulation of capital and the relative impoverishment of the global proletariat, Foster and McChesney explain how these processes are dependent on the existence of a large class of unemployed reserve labour which is leveraged against upwards pressures on wages that might otherwise slow or halt concentration of wealth. The availability of this reserve labour to employers in Canada through temporary migration programs can be used both to supply growing labour demands and as a counterweight against wage growth demanded by the domestic workforce.

Harvey's claims that both undocumented and regulated migrant labour are intrinsic parts of the neoliberal economic model are further echoed by Bauder's (2006) book, *Labor Movement*, the central argument of which concerns how "migration regulates labor markets, not the other way around" (p. 3). Migrants, Bauder says, are commonly hired for positions that domestic workers do not want, which often means those with the lowest wages. This process in turn affects the domestic labour market as migrant labour programs "facilitate the reduction of overall wage levels, help to lower labor standards, and assist in introducing more flexible employment practices" (Bauder, 2006, p. 4). The addition of migrant workers who are subject to either restrictions on their rights associated with their temporary status or the precariousness of a lack of status,

therefore, has the effect of relieving pressure on employers to improve the conditions and wages of low-status positions in the segmented labour market. Bauder's ideas overlap partially with Peck's (1996) work arguing that labour markets are socially regulated, rather than the result of rational market forces, as various institutions and actors, each with their own political and social outlooks, play a role in guiding workers to jobs and shaping the conditions of work. In this sense, cultural and racial othering of migrant workers also plays a role in determining their status within the segmented labour market (Bauder, 2006). This process can be clearly seen in the literature on migrant farm workers in Canada. Preibisch (2010) explains that employers who hire workers through the SAWP have been able to select them by nationality and how some have used this privilege to create divides within the workforce, hiring different groups for different jobs or threatening to request workers from a different country in future years. This power grants employers even greater control over their workforce and reduces the bargaining power of workers who attempt to initiate collective action to improve their conditions.

Limited as they are to the jobs that citizens and permanent residents do not prefer, migrant workers have become a dependable source of labour for agricultural production, but also an exploitable one. Migrant workers with precarious migration status (whether temporary or illegal) are more likely than permanently settled immigrants to experience precarious employment, a set of circumstances with consequences including workplace abuse, exploitation, and health and safety hazards (Moyce & Schenker, 2018). In the context of Canada's agricultural migrant labour programs, this effect is well documented. Migrant workers have been shown to

experience dangerous working conditions including the use of machinery and chemicals on which they have not received adequate training as well as unusually long and physically demanding workdays that contribute to high incidence of injury and illness (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019). Migrant workers' precarious status has been further linked to increased exposure to disease in the workplace (Elbadri, 2021). These health and safety hazards are compounded by persistent difficulties in access to health care (a service to which they are legally entitled) due to language barriers, location, and/or fear of the potential consequences of reporting an illness or injury to their employer (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019). Employers can dismiss workers without cause and have been known to do so when a worker is temporarily unable to work, effectively eliminating their ability to stay and work in Canada (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012). This power dynamic may cause migrant workers to continue working through serious health problems and discourage them from reporting unsafe working or living conditions for fear of having to return to their home countries and losing the income that they meant to earn in Canada that year and potentially in future years (Aguiar et al., 2011). Migrant labour programs that tie migrants' status to their employers therefore create a class of workers who will accept conditions and pay that would be rejected by citizens or permanent residents, making them highly desirable to employers who depend on positions towards the lower end of the segmented labour market.

Bauder (2006) points out that while states and employers use migration to regulate labour markets (often to the detriment of both migrant and domestic workers), migrants themselves are usually the target of blame for depressed wages and poor labour standards. However, it is the division of the global labour pool through bordered

restrictions on the mobility of workers that allows this to occur (Bauder, 2006). Migrant workers are willing to accept lower wages and conditions than citizens or permanent residents would specifically because they are denied the privileges of citizenship and barred from acceptance into the host society (Bauder, 2006). Limitations on their length of stay and the absence of family reunification are examples of how such policies differentiate migrant workers from citizens and permanent residents and reinforce their temporary status.

Labour Market Segmentation Theory (Beck et al., 1978; Cain, 1976; Seo, 2021) provides a compelling explanation for why many high-income countries have come to rely on managed migration to fill low-wage positions in the agricultural sector and in recent decades it has been used to conceptualize temporary migration not only in Canada (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012), but also in other international context such as Germany (Constant & Massey, 2005) and the UK (McCollum & Findlay, 2015). While migration researchers have evidently found uses for Labour Market Segmentation Theory, there remain critiques that it is difficult to empirically demonstrate (or disprove) labour market segmentation. As Karpestam and Andersson explain, this would require “defining the dual structures of the economy in an objective and non-arbitrary manner” (2013, p. 18). While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to attempt such a definition, I do consider there to be enough supporting evidence of segmentation in the agricultural sector – considering the general undesirability and non-competitiveness of these positions described earlier in this section - to apply Labour Market Segmentation Theory’s main concepts in cases such as Canada’s agricultural migrant worker programs.

This overview of Labour Market Segmentation Theory provides an indication of its usefulness for understanding Canada's agricultural migrant worker streams under the TFWP. Many agricultural employers continue to rely on workers whose jobs occupy a position near the bottom of the labour market hierarchy and are not widely seen as meriting higher compensation and improved working conditions. Migrant labour has emerged as a common solution to this problem, as states are able to use their border controls to legalize migrant workers or subject them to highly restrictive conditions on their residency and employment, the outcome in either case being to make them strategically vulnerable and dependent on their employer. Temporary status prevents migrant workers from integrating with the domestic workforce, effectively removing them from the labour market hierarchy and allowing employers to continue offering undesirable pay and conditions. Growth in demand for migrant labour in agriculture can therefore continue unabated through periods of high unemployment because these jobs are not sought after by most of the domestic labour market due to considerations such as wages and working conditions as well as their low status.

2.4 The New Economics of Labour Migration and Migrant Workers as a Global Labour Reserve

While Labour Market Segmentation Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the demand for agricultural migrant labour in countries like Canada, it is equally important to consider the growth of migrant labour streams from the perspective of migrant workers themselves. After all, as explained above in Chapter 2.2, migrant labour is so desirable to agricultural employers precisely because there is a virtually inexhaustible international labour pool to fill positions left vacant by the domestic

workforce. Earlier, in Chapter 2.1, I presented how neoclassical economic theories view the decision to migrate for work through a rational individualist lens, prioritizing the difference in potential earnings between home and destination countries as the ultimate factor in explaining the decision to migrate. A competing theory of migration that I will argue presents a more nuanced view of this decision is the New Economics of Labour Migration.

Emerging in the 1980s, the New Economics of Labour Migration recasts labour migration as a decision made at the level of the migrant's household rather than one made by the supposedly rational, self-interested individual (Massey et al., 1993). In other words, compared with earlier neoclassical migration theories, the focus of analysis moves from the individual migrant to the household or even community as a unit (Abreu, 2012). The decision to send a family member to work abroad is based on not just wage disparity between countries but also various factors including the temporary absence of that family member in daily life, the resulting loss of productivity for family businesses or other local income streams, and the potential value of remittances from international work to the household's finances. Balancing these considerations, a family may decide that it is in their collective interest for a member to temporarily migrate as a means of both increasing household income and insuring against risks to local income streams (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1999). New Economics of Labour Migration theorists have also asserted that remittance flows can have a positive impact on local economic development in migrants' home communities, not only from foreign earnings being reinvested in migrant households' other income streams, but also through the indirect

economic impacts that increased household consumption may have on others (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1999).

The New Economics of Labour Migration has been applied in a Canadian context. Carvajal and Johnson (2016), for example, found that Mexican migrant workers seek opportunities in Canadian agriculture to earn income that can be remitted to their families in their home countries. Workers reported using remittances to support the daily needs of the family such as food and shelter, but also to reinvest into family businesses, housing improvements, and educational opportunities for children (Carvajal & Johnson, 2016). Temporary labour migration is seen in this context as a tradeoff between the sacrifice of sending one family member abroad and the potential benefits of adding a greater and potentially more stable income stream, satisfying the need for improved access to capital and self-insurance to allow for investment and higher household consumption (Carvajal & Johnson, 2016).

The New Economics of Labour Migration is often portrayed as a departure from and correction to the rigid focus on the individual as a unit of analysis that characterizes the neoclassical theory of migration (Massey et al., 1993). Abreu (2012), however, describes this theory as still, at its core, methodologically individualistic. They argue that while the unit of analysis may shift from the migrant to the household or community, an overemphasis on rational choice by these actors may risk ignoring societal or structural dynamics influencing migration, such as processes of capital accumulation. Abreu (2012) further asserts that a historical-structural lens should be applied to reach a more thorough understanding of migration trends within the contexts that motivate and

constrain migration behaviour. Despite this critique, I still consider the New Economics of Labour Migration's explanation of remittance flows in relation to household financial strategies to be useful for explaining the continued interest of many migrant workers in the TFWP. However, I will situate these decisions within their historical-structural context by considering the developments that have led to reliance on foreign income streams for many migrants' families to access investable capital and greater financial security.

While wage differences between countries such as Canada and Mexico are undoubtedly an essential factor in the decision to migrate, I will argue that there are additional causes feeding into temporary migration flows from low and middle-income countries to higher-income countries. These causes stem from the destabilizing influences of globalization and neoliberal policy regimes which have driven many in rural and agricultural communities to depend on external income sources. Bauder (2006) points out that international flows of development capital to lower and middle-income countries have often been conditional on the adoption of neoliberal policies, resulting in the rapid conversion of some populations from subsistence agriculture to wage labour and contributing to the creation of a global proletariat primed for economic migration. Bauder cautions, however, that attributing international migration to solely economic causes overlooks the agency of migrants and their families. While I agree that these causes cannot be considered solely responsible, I will argue that they provide a context in which we can better understand the decisions of potential migrants and their families.

Mexico, the largest source country of agricultural migrant workers to Canada, provides an illustrative example of how economic circumstances have created the conditions for many families to consider temporary labour migration. Specifically, I refer to how rural communities in Mexico have become the sites of both economic destabilization through globalization and a high degree of out-migration, and the apparent linkages between these two trends. A 2007 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report provides a detailed – though not very recent – demographic and economic description of rural Mexico. It shows that the rural population of Mexico, which is larger than that of any other OECD country, is considerably poorer and younger than the country's urban centres (OECD, 2007). The report also shows that rural areas have experienced net out-migration, both to urban centres in Mexico and internationally, particularly to the United States (OECD, 2007). More recent research validates the relationship between rurality and temporary migration, as rural communities in Mexico have been found to present limited economic opportunities outside of agriculture and continued dependence on remittances (Wassink & Hagan, 2022). These themes align with much of what is known about the backgrounds of Mexican seasonal agricultural workers in Canada, who are most often recruited from rural areas (Caxaj, et al., 2022).

The rural-urban economic divide in Mexico is a topic with a history too long and complex to cover in this dissertation, but I will briefly explain some of the changes that have occurred in recent decades that the literature indicates may have played a role in pushing rural populations towards labour migration. Particularly since the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), research has pointed to how

neoliberal restructuring policies and international trade have disrupted the traditional agricultural production on which many rural communities previously depended, such as the dramatic increase in imports of American corn which has supplanted locally-grown, indigenous varieties in many parts of the country (Barkin, 2002). While entering into NAFTA, along with other neoliberal policies of the 1990s, were promoted by then-president Carlos Salinas de Gortari as a way to reduce outflows of migration through economic development, the effect in many rural areas has been the reverse, with the weakening of primary agriculture leading many families to consider temporary or permanent migration, either within Mexico or abroad, as a way to remain afloat in a rapidly changing economic landscape (Martínez, 2007). While depopulation of rural Mexico from permanent outmigration that some researchers had predicted following the establishment of NAFTA appears not to have materialized (Bada & Fox, 2022), persistent dependence on remittances from temporary migration, especially to the United States, has become a characteristic of many rural areas (Wassink & Hagan, 2022). Temporary or seasonal agricultural migration in Mexico is therefore connected to rurality and shaped by the disruptive impacts that globalization and neoliberal policy have had on rural economies. While my analysis in this section has focused on Mexico, Cohen (2019) argues that similar patterns of economic crises spurred by neoliberal reforms have led to displacement and impoverishment of people and the creation of a pool of potential migrant workers in countries across the Global South.

There is evidence in the literature to support a New Economics of Labour Migration-based understanding of migration in this context. Carvajal and Johnson's (2016) research on Mexican workers in the SAWP using a New Economics of Labour

Migration model showed that approximately 80 percent of earnings are remitted to migrants' families. These remittances are used to meet a wide range of household needs, including general daily expenses such as food and electricity, but also to make various long-term investments. Such investments include the creation and expansion of family-run businesses, particularly farming operations, as well as housing construction and schooling for children (Carvajal Gutiérrez & Johnson, 2016). As anticipated by the researchers' New Economics of Labour Migration-informed model, migrant workers' excess income was used to improve the quality of life of the entire household, as it is a decision and sacrifice made by the family to send a member abroad.

Other researchers have written less positively about the potential for remittances to substantially improve the quality of life of migrant workers and their families. Wells et al. (2014), for example, conducted a study of the impacts of remittances on SAWP workers' families in Guanajuato, Mexico and found that this income source is often "literally a lifeline" (p. 144), providing for their housing, food, clothing, and other needs in the absence of other dependable income sources in their home communities, as well as in some cases offering them a chance to invest in family businesses or children's education. Their conclusion, however, was that this income is not usually sufficient to raise these families out of poverty and precarity. Often the remittances were enough to meet the family's subsistence needs but not much else, particularly when workers' contracts in Canada were four months or less. Furthermore, families can become overly dependent on SAWP income, which comes with its own form of precarity (Wells et al., 2014). Castell Rodán and Alavarez Anaya (2022) similarly claim that the program "has increased the dependency of families upon migrant wages while also deepening the

historic proletarianization of Mexican peasants” (p. 165). This ‘proletarianization’ refers to Mexican rural communities’ move from subsistence agriculture to wage labour due to economic restructuring and rural land dispossession in the twentieth century (Castell Roldán & Alvarez Anaya, 2022). This dependency on income from migrant labour is problematic because, as explained above, workers in the TFWP are tied to a single employer who they depend on for their continued ability to reside and work in Canada. A sudden setback such as illness, injury, or even the whims of a malicious employer could result in a migrant worker being sent home, depriving their family of this vital source of income indefinitely.

The evidence for agricultural labour migration programs such as the TFWP having a substantial impact on economic development in rural communities in sending countries therefore appears inconclusive. In support of the claims of the New Economics of Labour Migration, migrant workers do send large portions of their income home to their families, which then decide as a household how best to support themselves with this money, often investing it in ways that may improve their quality of life. However, the lack of definitive evidence that additional wealth is being embedded in these communities and creating further opportunities for economic growth, combined with the way in which this income source is tied to a precarious working status, limit the SAWP as a model for international development through temporary migration.

Notably, while remittances from migrant labour are sometimes seen, particularly from the perspective of workers’ home countries, as a potential driver of economic development, this does not appear to be a prominent consideration in how the

Canadian government designs, implements, or publicly frames their agricultural migrant worker streams. Under the SAWP, for example, worker recruitment is left to the governments of sending countries as part of their responsibilities under the bilateral agreement, meaning the Canadian government does not choose who gains access to income through this program (Preibisch, 2014). While these governments may incorporate development interests into their selection criteria, it is not something that the Canadian government has taken any apparent steps to promote. In fact, selection criteria are often designed instead to ensure that migrant workers will return to their home country at the end of their contract, for example by intentionally recruiting workers who have dependents at home (Basok, 2002). Sending countries under the SAWP may adopt such criteria to minimize the risks of workers overstaying their visa, which would potentially be a risk to their position as partners in the program. Migrant labour's international development potential also rarely shows up in public statements from the Canadian government. Early in the pandemic, for example, migrant workers were delayed from entering Canada due to a combination of travel bans, cancelled flights, and other breakdowns in the international travel system. In response, the government made it clear that ensuring the arrival of migrant workers to their workplace was a priority in order to help agricultural employers who suddenly found themselves short of labour (Weiler & Grez, 2022). What they did not commonly mention was the potential financial impact that migrant workers and their families were facing from this delay in starting their work in Canada. In fact, the Canadian government ultimately did nothing to compensate these workers for the associated loss of income that they saw, as migrant workers were not eligible for the same benefits as other Canadian workers who had lost

their jobs, such as the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (Helps et al., 2022). In this situation at least, the financial stability of migrant farm workers and their families and the indirect economic impact on rural communities in sending countries was evidently not a priority for the Canadian government. An exception to the travel restrictions was eventually made for these workers, but this appears to have been done on behalf of employers struggling to recruit staff rather than the workers themselves. The ways in which the SAWP is publicly framed, structured, and implemented therefore show an obvious disconnect in what it means to policy makers and employers in Canada compared to migrant workers and their families in sending countries.

The literature on the New Economics of Labour Migration shows how seasonal labour migration and the associated remittances have become a vital aspect of these families' financial plans, providing the income required to satisfy immediate needs such as food and supplies and providing the capital required to make long-term investments in the household such as home improvements and expansion or creation of family businesses. While the long-term impact of these programs on economic development in migrant workers' communities is debatable, they do at least help to offset the difficulties faced by some rural communities in sending countries caused by global economic restructuring and neoliberal policy. That said, as demonstrated above, access to these programs is at the discretion of governments and employers in host countries, both of whom have demonstrated that they will not hesitate to cut off this access when it threatens other priorities such as farm profitability or reducing the inflow of COVID-19 cases. It can therefore be said that in programs like the SAWP, which function in large part due to the dependence of migrant workers under a New Economics of Labour

Migration framework, receiving states and employers exploit this dependency while demonstrating little consideration for the priorities of migrant workers and sending countries.

2.5 Stakeholders in Canada's Agricultural Migrant Labour System

Agricultural migrant labour in Canada is a complex system that requires the input of various stakeholders to sustain itself. Most obvious is the involvement of state actors, including Canadian federal and provincial governments as well as national and subnational governments in sending countries. However, there are also various non-state actors that play an integral role in maintaining, supporting, and sometimes challenging or influencing agricultural migrant labour. These include community groups and support networks, migrants' rights advocacy organizations, and most importantly for this dissertation, industry groups representing the interests of agri-food employers. In this section, I will identify the apparent interests and roles of these groups in the agricultural migrant labour system as depicted in the literature.

State actors are, of course, essential to the formation of managed agricultural migrant labour systems such as Canada's. This starts with the government of the receiving country, which exercises sovereignty over who is allowed to stay within its borders and the terms of that stay, including permission to work. In fact, Bauder (2017) describes how control over borders is one of the last true areas where the state has a monopoly on power, as neoliberal policy regimes have led nation states to cede much of their former authority to private actors. Given its sovereignty in the realm of immigration, the Canadian federal government has the authority to set the terms of

entry for migrant workers, the requirements of employers, and any expectations for sending country governments to contribute to the administration of this system.

However, as explained in section 2.1, the federal government has largely enabled the TFWP and SAWP to be driven by employer demand, allowing continuous growth in the number of migrant workers and giving industry groups such as FARMS a role in much of the program's administration.

There has historically been little disagreement with this state of affairs from within government. For the most part, mainstream political parties have made little mention of it in election platforms and expansion of migrant labour has continued under both Liberal and Conservative governments. Even Pierre Poilievre, the current federal Conservative Party leader, whose rhetorical style has often tapped into Canadian populist fears as a political strategy (Mola-Schmidt, 2023), has avoided criticizing the employment of migrant workers in agriculture and has staked out a position on immigration which frames it as a tool to help employers and grow the economy (Taylor, 2023).

That immigration should serve the economy is not a contrarian position in immigration politics but rather the accepted orthodoxy. The federal government has upheld this principle in its use of a points-based immigration system designed to attract talent to the Canadian economy, which unapologetically discriminates based on education, providing better opportunities for work permits and permanent residency to those deemed highly skilled (Tannock, 2011). The TFWP and SAWP also fall into this economy-first approach to immigration, but for the lower end of the labour market

hierarchy, which is reflected in the more restrictive rights provided to migrant workers during their stay, which generally do not include being able to bring their family members, apply for an open work permit (except in circumstances where they can demonstrate they are being abused by their employer), or make their residence status permanent (Basok & George, 2020). We therefore see labour market segmentation in the rights and privileges granted to different classes of immigrants. Furthermore, the structural power imbalances that enable migrant worker exploitation persist despite government inquiries such as a September 2016 Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (May 2016). This report cited testimony from witnesses pointing to employer-specific work permits as a primary cause of migrant worker abuse and exploitation and calling for the establishment of sector-specific open work permits and more accessible pathways to permanent residency (May 2016). The years since have seen some reforms that signal awareness of the structural vulnerability workers face, such as the establishment of open work permits for those who can demonstrate abuse by their employers, but the core issue of employer-specific permits has not been addressed.

While immigration, including temporary migration under the TFWP, is under federal jurisdiction in Canada, provinces play a role in the migrant labour system in areas that fall under their typical spheres of influence, such as labour, healthcare, and housing. For example, Marsden (2019) notes that interprovincial differences in labour law create an inconsistent workers' rights regime across Canada, with some provinces having notable exemptions from certain workers' protections, such as Ontario, where migrant farm workers are covered under separate worker protection legislation which

carves out standards related to hours of work and overtime pay (James, 2021). Similarly, provinces have created different policies related to providing workers with healthcare. British Columbia, for example, does not provide access to the public health system until three months after arrival, requiring employers to cover workers' healthcare during this time instead and leaving potential gaps where workers may not have sufficient healthcare coverage (Landry et al., 2021). Meanwhile, provincial land use policies play a key role in determining where and how employers can construct worker housing, thereby impacting the ease and cost of doing so (Oyewale, 2024). Provincial governments therefore have an impact on the experiences of migrant workers, though immigration policy generally falls under federal jurisdiction.

One of the central elements of the SAWP that has helped its reputation as a best practice internationally is the involvement of sending country governments (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012). These governments take on a considerable amount of responsibility for program administration, particularly in the areas of worker recruitment and providing consular services during migrants' stays (Preibisch, 2014). For example, in Mexico, the *Secretaría de Trabajo y Prevision Social* (translation: Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare) recruits workers from across the country to fill the quota apportioned to Mexico under the SAWP (Gabriel & Macdonald, 2019). These processes not only take the burden of worker recruitment off employers; they also help the Canadian government to meet its goal of preventing visa overstay and other forms of irregular migration. From a sending country's perspective, their role in helping to facilitate the SAWP may fit into broader economic development goals, as countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Mexico, have increasingly presented migration and the associated remittances

as a central part of development strategies (Philips, 2009), which migrant-receiving countries have played their own part in encouraging (Geiger & Pecoud, 2013). Competition between sending countries for a larger share of spots in the SAWP encourages governments to take an active role in ensuring their citizens do not break the terms of their stay, including through recruitment policies that select workers with families they will need to return to and training new migrants to avoid situations that might get them into trouble in Canada (Basok, 2002). As explained in Section 2.4, the SAWP can be a significant source of new investment for often underdeveloped rural areas in sending countries, suggesting that these governments are particularly motivated to preserve the flow of remittances and take steps accordingly. This role for sending country governments applies specifically to the SAWP and not the other three streams for agricultural migrant labour under the TFWP, as the SAWP is established through bilateral agreements with a limited set of sending countries whereas the other streams are not subject to such agreements. While governments in sending countries may play some role in facilitating their citizens' participation in other TFWP agricultural streams, there is little information about this in the literature.

Sending-country governments and consular officials have also been complicit in enabling poor conditions and abuses of workers' rights, according to the literature. Caxaj and Cohen (2019) describe various forms of "active and passive coercion" (p. 2) which prevent workers from seeking healthcare and workplace protections. This coercion is applied not only by employers but by the same consular officials ostensibly there to support migrants. Both actors, Caxaj and Cohen (2019) explain, seek conformity in the migrant workforce and may use workers' precarious status in Canada

to coerce them into accepting unsafe conditions. This may explain why researchers have also reported that while migrant workers can complain to representatives of their governments when dealing with exploitative work situations in Canada, they are often hesitant to initiate a complaint or are dissuaded from doing so by consular officials (Caxaj et al., 2022). The potential conflict between sending countries' interests in supporting migrant workers and ensuring consistent revenue through migrant remittances has also been noted in the negotiation of the SAWP contract, where Basok et al. (2002) argue sending-country governments have done little to improve protections for migrant workers because they are not motivated to do so. Therefore, while one might expect sending-country governments' interests to align closely with those of their citizens working in Canada, their policies and actions appear to prioritize macroeconomic goals such as preserving and growing remittance flows.

Outside of government, there are numerous civil society organizations that play a role in the agricultural migrant labour system. These groups have, in many cases, stepped in to fill the service gaps experienced by migrant workers, particularly in relation to healthcare through the organizing of special clinics and health-related events (McLaughlin & Tew, 2018). Such activities have been arranged by nongovernmental organizations such as Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers as well as community and church groups in areas that receive large numbers of migrant farm workers. While the services they deliver are essential to migrant worker health, they do not fully address structural barriers migrants face, such as difficulty requesting time off to rest and recover. Additionally, while these groups are quite active in areas with a high

density of migrant farm workers such as parts of Southern Ontario, there are many migrant workers in more isolated circumstances that may not benefit (Helps, 2020).

There are also groups that take a more activist approach towards improving the rights and conditions of migrant workers. These include workers' rights groups such as Justicia for Migrant Workers, a self-described "political collective... fighting racism, sexism and capitalism" (Justicia for Migrant Workers, n.d.) who regularly organize protests and social media campaigns in support of migrants' rights. Among their demands for reform to Canada's migrant labour system is a call for migrant workers to receive permanent resident status. From my own experience interacting with agricultural employers and industry representatives, I have seen the often-negative response such groups can provoke from members of the agri-food industry, being frequently derided as an activist fringe that aims to simply disrupt the industry with no regard for the consequences to growers' livelihoods or Canada's food systems. That advocacy groups such as Justicia for Migrant Workers seem to elicit stronger negative reactions than academic researchers who are often similarly critical of migrant labour practices perhaps indicates the effectiveness of their tactics in bringing attention to issues of workers' rights. I suspect that the presence of these groups has been a factor motivating the industry's more recent attempts to shift public discourse on the subject through their own media campaigns.

Of course, the most important stakeholders to understand when discussing migrant labour issues are migrant workers themselves. As explained in Section 2.4, according to the New Economics of Labour Migration, migrant workers and their families

are motivated by trade-offs between the absence of a family member – with all the negative outcomes for familial relationships that entails - and the potential for increased household income through remittances that can be reinvested and used to improve their lives (Taylor, 1999). However, while much has been written about what motivates migrant farm workers and the issues that affect them in Canada, it is harder to say with certainty what political goals they may want to achieve as a group. It is also not entirely clear whether most migrant workers share the same priorities and concerns as researchers and advocacy groups. Recommendations for radical changes such as eliminating these programs entirely (Binford, 2019) seem obviously contrary to the stated needs of migrant workers who have been quite vocal about the benefits – and often, necessity – of this income stream for their families. As I experienced during my earlier MSc thesis research, there can sometimes be a disconnect between the things that researchers of migrant labour consider important and the priorities of actual migrant workers, which tend to be more centered on their day-to-day conditions rather than theoretical power relationships between themselves and their employers (Helps, 2020). This meant that while they often acknowledged an unfairness inherent to Canada's migrant labour policies, they were generally more concerned with finding a workplace with higher earning potential, more comfortable living quarters, and/or a fair employer than they were with proposals for sweeping, systemic change (Helps, 2020).

I have reserved agri-food employers and industry groups for last as their interests are discussed in greatest detail throughout this dissertation. Agricultural employers and industry groups have played a pivotal role in the development of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system since before the creation of the SAWP in 1966. As mentioned

above, this program was created at least partially in response to the vocal demands of farm operators to have access to migrant labour. In section 2.3, I demonstrated how employers' ever-increasing requests for more workers through LMIAAs have driven unabated expansion in the number of agricultural migrant workers in Canada over the past few decades, regardless of ongoing economic trends or global events.

Within this context, clearly the interests of agricultural employers and groups representing them are tied to the continuation and expansion of access to migrant labour. Calls to increase oversight, strengthen regulations, or provide more open migration status to migrant workers have at times met with opposition by the industry. For example, in 2023 OFVGA sent a written submission to the federal Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in connection to a government study on potential reform to the structure of closed work permits under the TFWP (OFVGA, 2023c). In their submission, OFVGA pushed back against the "common criticism of the TFW program ... that employees have no option to leave a workplace that they deem unacceptable" (p. 1) and urged caution against "trade-offs and risks in terms of the dependency of agricultural production on a reliable and predictable workforce" (p. 5) that may stem from reforms to worker mobility. While this does not signal a complete opposition to any kind of workers' rights reform, it does serve as an example of some industry groups' preference for the current policy framework.

2.6 A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Migrant Labour Discourse

To critically analyze the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative, it is important to understand the context from which it arises, which encompasses much of what has been presented in the preceding sections. To recap, *More than a Migrant Worker* emerges in a context where, as described in Section 2.1, the Canadian agri-food migrant labour system continues to grow, supplying more workers year after year to meet the needs of the industry, seemingly undeterred by financial crises, pandemics, and other labour market trends, or by the mounting critiques of researchers, advocates, and journalists that the TFWP and its streams leave workers vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, with a variety of negative health and social outcomes. In this context, there is seemingly little political pressure to substantially change workers' status under the TFWP's agri-food streams or make these streams more difficult for employers to access, and the role of migrant workers in Canadian agri-food production for the foreseeable future appears generally accepted by public opinion.

More than a Migrant Worker appears to have been created as a response to the many critiques described above and as an investment in the continued growth of this system. A theoretical framework is necessary to contextualize the arguments presented by these industry groups as well as the many statements they have selected from migrant workers, agri-food employers, and industry representatives. This framework is built out of a combination of the Labour Market Segmentation and New Economics of Labour Migration theories outlined above and is designed to explain agricultural migrant labour in Canada as a system for the purpose of critically analyzing discourses like

those contained in the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative. The visual below represents how these theories combine into a framework that supports the explanation of agricultural migrant labour as a system.

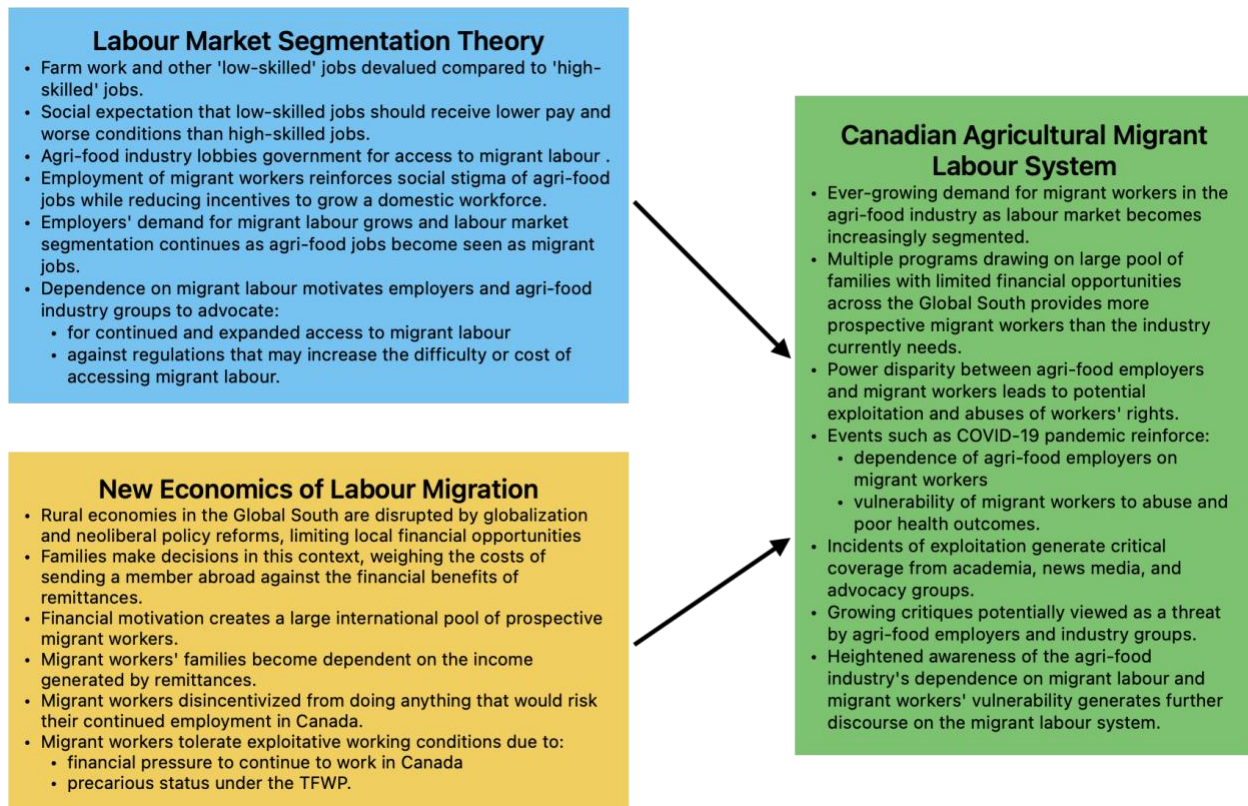


Figure 3: Visualization of Theoretical Framework

As seen in Figure 3, both Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration contribute to this framework, explaining supply of and demand for migrant labour, respectively. Neither theory can fully explain this system in its entirety, but the two of them combined explain many of its outputs, including the increased vulnerability of migrant workers, the continued advocacy of the employers and industry groups for access to this labour source, and the discourse that this system generates.

As explained in Section 2.3, Labour Market Segmentation Theory explains the social creation of a labour hierarchy which devalues many agri-food jobs as low-skilled. The resulting stigmatization, low compensation, and lack of career growth opportunities relative to higher-skilled jobs disincentivize domestic workers from taking these positions and drive employers and industry groups to seek access to an international workforce (Dickens & Lang, 1992; Massey et al., 1993). This explanation would be incomplete, however, without also considering the underlying international inequality that has created the supply of prospective migrant workers to allow the program to continue expanding. This is where Labour Market Segmentation Theory combines with the New Economics of Labour Migration, which identifies family financial planning within the constraints of predominantly rural communities in the Global South as the primary motivation of migrant workers and their families to continue participating in temporary migration, weighing the financial benefit of remittances against the many costs of temporarily sending a family member abroad (Stark & Bloom, 1995; Taylor, 1999). The result of both trends – Canadian workers' decreased interest in agri-food jobs within a segmented labour market and the incentivization of temporary migration as conceptualized by the New Economics of Labour Migration – is a growing demand for migrant labour in the Canadian agri-food industry and a virtually endless supply of prospective migrant workers in the Global South.

The outputs of this system under the framework I have visualized in Figure 3 are key to understanding the agri-food industry discourse of the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative. As will be described in further detail in my findings under Chapter 4, much of the discourse concerns the importance of migrant labour both to the agri-food

industry and to workers, featuring quotations from employers describing its necessity for food production and workers explaining how the income from remittances supports their families. The importance of the TFWP's streams to both groups is explained by this framework, providing context for many of their experiences.

My findings also identify industry groups' defensive response against critiques of the use of migrant labour in agriculture. This framework not only provides context for this response – by explaining the importance of migrant labour within a segmented labour market – but also the root cause of the power differential between employers and migrant workers that creates the systemic vulnerability to exploitation that is most often the subject of critique. In this system, as I have argued above, the precarity of migrant workers due to their migration status and the dependence of their families on remittance income helps to ensure they will fulfill the needs of Canada's agri-food industry that the domestic workforce will not. This exploitation is present regardless of the intentions or actions of any individual agri-food employer as it is structural to the TFWP and its streams. This structural vulnerability of migrant workers, as conceptualized in this framework, is used in my findings to give context to many of the arguments that *More than a Migrant Worker* often makes in defense of the migrant labour system.

Finally, this framework is useful for understanding the growth of migrant labour discourse from various groups in the agri-food industry, academia, media, and migrant rights advocacy. As explained by Labour Market Segmentation Theory, the demand for migrant workers in the Canadian agri-food industry continues to grow as segmentation progresses and the industry becomes more dependent on this labour source, motivating

employers and industry groups to advocate for continued or expanded access and to push back against outside critiques. Simultaneously, the vulnerability of migrant farm workers whose families are dependent on remittances, as explained by the New Economics of Labour migration, and who have limited protections under the terms of the TFWP, creates the conditions for the many forms of exploitation that have been documented in academic, journalistic, and activist discourses. As I will explain in my findings, much of the selected discourse from *More than a Migrant Worker* appears to be responding to some of these critiques.

While developing this framework, I surveyed other theories of migration, some of which helped to inform my framework but ultimately were not as well suited to the temporary migration system that is the subject of inquiry. World Systems Theory is a historical-structural framework sometimes used to explain migration as a result of interconnections between places. As summarized by Riosmena (2024), “pre-established translocal and transnational connections may not only stimulate movement but deeply influence the geography of migration and of migration aspirations” (p. 694). While elements of this theory can be seen in Canada’s agricultural migrant labour system, such as in the bilateral agreements within sending countries that form the basis for the SAWP, migrant workers in Canada’s agri-food industry come from countries across the Global South, making it difficult – and beyond the scope of this dissertation – to analyze the nature of the myriad historical ties that may have resulted in the establishment of migration flows from all sending countries.

Another prominent migration theory is Social Capital or Network Theory. This theory emphasizes the importance of ties and connections between migrants to reduce uncertainty and increase migration towards particular destinations (Bashi, 2007). Essentially, the existence of migrants with shared background makes others of that background more likely to migrate to the same place as these connections help to facilitate their migration and settlement (Riosmena, 2024). While this theory may be applicable in some contexts within Canada's agricultural migrant labour system, such as where migrants have joined siblings or parents in applying through one of the TFWP's streams, these connections do not appear as a prominent theme across the literature, which seems to indicate that earning potential and families' financial situations are stronger motivating factors.

A final theory that was considered in relation to Canada's agricultural migrant labour system is the Institutional Theory of Migration. This theory holds that public, private, and voluntary institutions arise to facilitate migration processes in cases where interest in migration is high and opportunities for legal migration (i.e., visas, permits, etc.) are limited (Massey et al., 1993; Riosmena, 2024). While there are institutions within Canada that fill such roles – for example, the employer-serving nonprofit FARMS or the many organizations that provide voluntary medical and legal services to migrant workers – the focus of my theoretical framework is on the motivations propelling employers and workers to continue engaging in the migrant labour system, rather than on the institutions that help to facilitate it.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented how existing research explains the emergence and growth of this system in response to the demands of agri-food employers who pushed the Canadian government for access to a migrant labour stream in the 1960s and subsequently requested workers in increasing numbers throughout the decades since. This expansion has continued amid the many critiques from academic researchers and advocacy groups that I identified, including that these programs place migrant workers at a structural disadvantage in relation to their employer, depriving them of the security to assert their rights. I then presented the two most effective theories I have identified for conceptualizing this system and its continual growth. Labour Market Segmentation Theory explains how certain kinds of work, including many agri-food jobs, become devalued not only in terms of pay but also in social status, giving rise to the demand for a migrant workforce as the domestic workforce begins to reject these opportunities. Simultaneously, the New Economics of Labour Migration provides an understanding the motivations of migrant workers and their families to participate in a system with so many apparent disadvantages. This theory explains the decision to send a family member abroad to work as a way of investing in the household in an environment with few other economic opportunities. Within this framework, the various interested stakeholders, including sending and receiving country governments, academia, advocacy groups, and the migrant workers and agricultural employers themselves, all play an important role in shaping discourse. As will be explained in the next chapter outlining my methodology, my research examines industry discourse captured from the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative to understand what it can tell us

about these industry groups' priorities and concerns are regarding this system, and the narrative about it that they have chosen to present to the public.

3 Methodology

As outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, I will be critically analyzing industry-generated discourse surrounding agricultural migrant labour systems in Canada. The issue of migrant workers' rights and conditions has generated a considerable amount of discourse from various parts of society, particularly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the growing body of academic literature presented in Chapter 2, as well as grey literature. There are numerous stakeholder groups engaged in the agricultural migrant labour discourse from different perspectives, including news journalism, activism, government, and the agri-food industry.

Academic writing on agricultural migrant labour in Canada often largely ignores much of the non-academic discourse. Many of the works surveyed in the literature review above draw from other academic research and from the first-hand testimony of migrant workers through key informant interviews – an essential primary source. What I've identified as missing from much of the literature is an analysis of the discourse originating from the agri-food industry itself. While migrant labour researchers often make recommendations for various groups including policy makers, there is limited discussion of how reported findings will be interpreted by media or the public, let alone employers and industry groups. Given the active role that industry groups play in shaping and even administering migrant labour programs in Canada, it is important to understand what their aims might be and how their arguments and narratives interact with those presented by academic and advocacy circles. To reiterate the research questions presented in the introduction, they are:

1. How does the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative portray Canada's agricultural migrant labour system to the public?
2. How does this portrayal respond to critiques of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system identified in the academic literature?

This dissertation addresses these questions using critical discourse analysis, a methodological approach in which texts and other media are critically analyzed to uncover the implicit power dynamics and normative assumptions that shape how themes are presented (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2022; Locke, 2004; Van Dijk, 2015). Critical discourse analysis is methodologically consistent with much of the existing research on migrant farm workers outlined in the literature review above in that it is qualitative and non-positivist. Critical discourse analysis can be considered to fall within a constructivist paradigm, as the researcher is required to recognize the socially constructed nature of meanings within the discourse (Locke, 2004). Applying a constructivist paradigm is necessary to answer this project's research questions regarding the discourse's portrayal of migrant worker related issues, as the meanings within such text are constructed between the writers and readers of a text (Locke, 2004).

Van Dijk (2015) provides an overview of critical discourse analysis in which they are careful to point out that it is not a specific method with a single established methodological approach to selection and analysis of texts¹. Rather, critical discourse

¹ For specific methods used in this dissertation, please see Sections 3.1 and 3.2.

analysis is defined by consideration of a context of social power structures to see how discourses uphold – or resist – unequal power relations (Van Dijk, 2015). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2022) further explain that to assess texts, critical discourse analysis must be accompanied by a theoretical framework. Such a framework provides an understanding of the power structures that discourses may uphold or challenge (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2022).

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides such context for the critical assessment of *More than a Migrant Worker*. As outlined above, Labour Market Segmentation Theory contextualizes the dependency of agri-food employers on migrant labour. Meanwhile, the New Economics of Labour Migration explains the role of migrant remittances in the finances of households in many rural areas of the Global South where alternative opportunities for upward financial mobility are limited. As my framework proposes, these trends result in an international agricultural migrant labour system wherein employers and industry representatives are motivated to preserve access to migrant labour and resist regulation, while migrants are dissuaded from challenging abuses of power due to the risk to their families' livelihoods, resulting in the systemic exploitation documented across the academic literature. The theoretical framework outlined above can contextualize the messages and narratives conveyed by the discourse within these unequal power structures, as Van Dijk (2015), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2022), and Locke (2004) all explain is necessary for critical discourse analysis.

3.1 Application of Critical Discourse Analysis Methods

For this dissertation, I am applying critical discourse analysis methods to a pool of grey literature generated by agri-food industry groups, with a focus on the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative. As explained above, *More than a Migrant Worker* is a campaign initiated by a collection of groups representing much of Ontario's agri-food industry, including OFVGA, OGVG, OAG, and FFCO. These groups' members largely operate within subsectors that make heavy use of migrant labour including greenhouse, nursery and floriculture, vegetable and melon farming, and fruit and tree nut farming. Texts were identified and selected for critical discourse analysis through *More than a Migrant Worker's* website. Critical discourse analysis allows me to discuss the ways that these interest groups create meanings that align with their positions within existing power structures (Wodak, 2021). Texts, when analyzed using these methods, can reveal "ways in which discourses consolidate power and colonize human subjects through often covert position calls" (Locke, 2004, p. 2). Through this critical lens, my analysis will yield insights about the arguments made by academic and industry participants in the agricultural migrant labour discourse, the ideological underpinnings of these arguments, and the rhetorical techniques used to advance them.

The choice of critical discourse analysis as a method for this project stemmed from several considerations. First there is the novelty of this approach, as I am not aware of any other such analysis of industry-generated discourse in Canadian agriculture. As already explained, the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative represents an unprecedented effort by industry groups to influence public opinion on this topic,

making a critical discourse analysis possible. I could have investigated industry groups' and employers' thoughts on these matters through other methods such as key informant interviews, and I did consider incorporating such interviews into my analysis, but the existence of this novel data source presents an opportunity to approach this topic in a new way. Ultimately, I found the collected texts to quickly provide saturation of analysis, rendering key informant interviews unnecessary. Furthermore, I considered that the likelihood of key informant interviews with individuals closely associated with the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative would be unlikely to yield additional insights into the thoughts and motivations of those involved beyond what they have already communicated quite transparently on their website and in associated articles.

While the use of critical discourse analysis may be relatively unusual among studies on agricultural migrant labour in Canada, it is not entirely unprecedented. Tungohan and Careless (2023) conducted critical discourse analysis on the treatment of migrant workers in Canadian news media between 2010 and 2020. Their use of this method proved effective for drawing out explicit and implicit meanings and how they reinforced existing power structures and common perceptions of this group.

Beyond the study of Canadian agricultural migrant labour, critical discourse analysis has been similarly applied as a methodological approach to a variety of research topics. Khosravinik (2010), for example, applied Critical Discourse analysis to a selection of British newspapers over a four-year period to assess representations of immigrants and refugees. Other examples of critical discourse analysis being used as a sole methodological approach can be found in Pekkanen and Penttilä's (2021) research

on ethnocentric consumption through buy domestic campaign labelling and Timke's (2023) work on disability representation in advertising industry guidance materials.

While these works are not directly connected to the topic of representation of migrant farm workers, they illustrate that critical discourse analysis has been used as a sole method of data collection and analysis to produce findings from a pool of text-based sources.

This use of critical discourse analysis acknowledges that, as a complex system involving multiple stakeholder groups – and a fair amount of controversy – agricultural migrant labour in Canada has been the subject of evolving discourses involving academic researchers, industry, journalism, government, workers' groups, and more. Given the power dynamics that shape the relationships within the agricultural migrant labour system, critical discourse analysis is an ideal methodological framework for approaching grey literature produced by the agri-food industry, as it analyses the ways that information is included and excluded, arguments are framed, and language is used to reconstruct social structures and hierarchies (Locke, 2004). This therefore provides an opportunity to dissect the ways that the agri-food industry filters information about migrant workers through their own sense of meaning and how their representation of the migrant labour system reflects and furthers their interests within the framework outlined in Chapter 2.

3.2 Selection of Texts

At the outset of this project, I identified *More than a Migrant Worker* as a starting point for collecting data on industry discourse of migrant workers, but I quickly found

that it would need to become the primary focus of my analysis. One reason for this is the quantity of discourse that it provided. At the time that I conducted my search in early summer 2024, *More than a Migrant Worker's* website yielded a pool of 125 original text sources, including 107 profiles of migrant farm workers interviewed for the initiative and 18 other pages and posts on their website with substantial content for analysis. The *More than a Migrant Worker* website also hosted copies of 29 articles appearing in other publications along with links to the originals – from major newspapers like the Toronto Star and National Post to small town news publishers and industry websites – many of which indicate that they were sponsored articles. While it is uncertain whether all of these articles featured direct involvement of the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative in their creation, the fact that they are hosted on the initiative's website I would argue makes them part of this discourse, as it signals that these industry groups at least agree with the content of these articles and want to share them with the public. *More than a Migrant Worker's* website also led me to an educator's resource hosted by AgScape and 2 webpages on the websites of OFVGA and OGVG, bringing the total number of texts captured to 157. An overview of the selected texts can be seen in Table 1, below. A complete list of all texts can be found in Appendix I.

While I initially intended to conduct analysis on agri-food industry discourse from additional sources beyond *More than a Migrant Worker*, after searching other known industry group websites, I did not find any of them provided nearly enough discourse on migrant labour to yield a sample that could be compared to *More than a Migrant Worker* in any compelling way. The *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative is, to my knowledge, truly unique in its scale, its tight focus on this single issue, and the breadth of different

industry groups involved, making it, I would argue, the de facto voice of the Ontario agri-food industry in migrant labour discourse. Additionally, with 157 texts collected from their website, I determined that *More than a Migrant Worker* provided enough data to form a case study on its own, and that introducing a handful of texts scattered across other sources throughout the Canadian agri-food industry would only reduce clarity around the limitations and applicability of my findings.

Type	Media outlet(s)	Number of texts
News articles/opinion pieces	National Post (8 texts) Toronto Star (7 texts) Ontario Farmer (2 texts) The Grower (2 texts) Canadian Grocer (1 text) Chatelaine (1 text) Chatham Daily News (1 text) Farms.com (1 text) Farmtario (1 text) Fresh Plaza (1 text) Grimsby Lincoln News (1 text) Niagara on the Lake Local (1 text) The Rural Voice (1 text) The Windsor Star (1 text)	29

Migrant worker profiles	<i>More than a Migrant Worker</i> (107 texts)	107
Other webpages and posts	<i>More than a Migrant Worker</i> (18 texts) Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (2 texts) Agscape (1 text)	21
		Total: 157

Table 1: Overview of selected texts

Inclusion criteria limited my search to materials produced by or in association with industry groups representing Ontario agri-food employers. To identify these texts, they had to be featured on the website of one of these groups or of an initiative tied to them such as *More than a Migrant Worker*. For example, the articles found in newspapers such as the Toronto Star and the National Post are also hosted on the *More than a Migrant Worker* website. They were also chosen based on subject matter. The websites of industry groups such as OFVGA and OGVG feature many posts with news about developments that are of interest to their members but do not make significant reference to migrant workers, for example. Such texts were excluded. Finally, texts produced prior to March 2020 were excluded from selection. This choice was made to isolate texts produced after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, which I have identified as a turning point in the migrant worker discourse as critiques of

the TFWP have gained more traction in mainstream media, as discussed in Chapter 2. Part of the purpose of this critical discourse analysis is to understand the agri-food industry's reaction to this heightened critique, so it seemed appropriate to exclude prior discourse.

3.3 Analysis of Texts

To approach the selected materials, I have used methods described by Locke (2004) for the treatment of printed texts through critical discourse analysis. These methods include identifying ways the text represents subjects or phenomena through choices in framing, rhetoric, stress, inclusion/exclusion of context, and organization/structure. In doing so, the analyst can make inferences about the text's intended social effects and the meanings it is meant to communicate to the reader (Locke, 2004). Such inferences require analyzing both explicit and implicit meanings of the text. For this project, I apply these concepts to the texts produced by the agri-food industry, critically analyzing the ways that information on migrant labour is communicated and what can be inferred about its intended influence on public opinion. For example, a common theme presented in my findings concerns the discourse's emphasis on the formal rights migrant farm workers have in Canada, such as access to public healthcare. This emphasis in many cases undercuts critiques commonly made that migrant workers suffer from illness, injury, and poor healthcare access. Meanwhile, comparatively little stress is placed on the barriers to healthcare reported across much of the academic literature, thereby downplaying the seriousness of healthcare access as an issue facing migrant workers.

Analysis began with open coding of the selected texts as described by Benaquisto (2012) to identify all potential themes in the discourse so that they could later be more closely analyzed. This process involved closely reading the texts line by line and highlighting themes as they emerged. An entire list of codes generated from this stage can be found in Appendix II. With my codes established, I turned to the work of critical discourse analysis, which requires the researcher to explore both intertextual and interdiscursive linkages (Fairclough 1992; Wodak, 2021).

Intertextual analysis in this case meant reviewing the coded data to identify the most prevalent themes and points of interconnection between themes. Through this process, I began to make note of the narratives shaped through this discourse and how they are communicated to the reader. For example, it quickly emerged that there is extensive overlap between themes of workers' homes and families and their reasons for working in Canada. The way in which these two themes overlapped informed my analysis that the discourse frames migrant workers' families' dependence on income from remittances in a way that not only tells these workers' stories but also elicits sympathy from the reader and may lead to increased support for migrant labour streams.

As mentioned earlier, critical discourse analysis also requires analysis of interdiscursive linkages within the discourse (Wodak, 2021; Fairclough 1992). Interdiscursivity refers to the connections between discourses, in this case the agri-food industry discourse in the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative and other discourses on the topic of migrant farm workers in Canada, including those presented from academia

and advocacy groups in the literature review in Chapter 2. The power relationships between employers and workers, the motivations of each respective group as explained through Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration, and the various academic and activist critiques of the Canadian agricultural migrant labour system set the context for understanding how the industry has portrayed migrant labour, the information it includes and excludes, and the techniques used to present meaning to its intended audience. In practice, the application of this context involved reviewing the coded dataset to identify points of reference to ideas and arguments presented in other discourses in migrant labour. In some cases, these interdiscursive connections are explicit within *More than a Migrant Worker*, as when it names specific texts it is responding to, such as the earlier mentioned report by United Nations Special Rapporteur Tomoya Obakata (2023). In others, this interdiscursivity is more implicit, such as where the discourse identifies problems of misinformation about migrant labour without specifically indicating where the alleged misinformation may be coming from. These themes were also noted and are presented in the findings to identify ways in which the agri-food industry discourse in *More than a Migrant Worker* forms connections with other discourses coming out of academia, media, and advocacy groups.

4 Findings and Discussion

As mentioned in Chapter 3, data was collected from the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative, which was created by agri-food industry groups in Ontario, as well as connected industry discourse hosted by other organizations. *More than a Migrant Worker*'s 'About Us' page (OFVGA, 2024a) hints at some of the themes that I found repeated throughout the selected discourse. It describes the initiative as an attempt to “thank and support the valuable workers who come here each year to help grow the local food that Ontarians enjoy and value so much” (OFVGA, 2024a). This page goes on to describe migrant workers as “vital” both to their employers and to their own families and communities and states that there is “more to their story” (OFVGA, 2024a). This page acknowledges “incidents where workers aren’t being treated properly or are subject to unacceptable living or working conditions... that farmers in no way condone” (OFVGA, 2024a). However, the authors insist that these situations are not reflective of most workers’ experiences. After all, the reader is reminded, many workers return year after year for decades and “have the same rights and privileges as Canadian workers do” (OFVGA, 2024a).

These brief excerpts of one introductory webpage from the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative contain a lot to unpack, but I will use them to outline some of the broader themes I will be discussing throughout this chapter as I present the results of my critical discourse analysis. First, there is the idea that there is ‘more to the story’ that these agri-food industry groups want to present to the public. This will be covered under

Section 4.1, which delves into the *More than a Migrant Worker's* representation of migrant worker identity, family life, and contributions to the agri-food system.

This introduction also hints at one of *More than a Migrant Worker's* central preoccupations, which seems to be an effort to push back on certain arguments surrounding the exploitation of migrant farm workers that have taken hold in popular and academic discourses. I have found the industry-generated materials use a variety of arguments and techniques – covered in Section 4.2 – in ways that seem to redirect, downplay, or contest the many critiques outlined above in the literature review.

In later sections of this chapter, I will make use of the themes emerging from the discourse to discuss the possible underlying meanings of the materials these industry groups have chosen to present to the public on migrant farm workers. As I argue, based on the themes I identify in the collected discourse, the agri-food industry groups behind *More than a Migrant Worker* display a defensive posture, which seems to be largely premised on the idea that the public, governments, and media have turned against the industry. This defensiveness, I will argue, is rooted in these groups' intuitive understanding of agri-food employers' dependence on migrant labour which has led them to receive external critiques and proposals for increased regulation as a kind of existential threat. In addition to this threat response, though, efforts like the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative appear to be at least partly a response to concerns from these organizations' members – agricultural employers – about the ways that they and the workers they employ are perceived.

Throughout this chapter, I link the themes I have identified back to the theoretical framework outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2. The arguments advanced by *More than a Migrant Worker* and other industry-generated materials interact in various ways with both Labour Market Segmentation Theory and New Economics of Labour Migration theories, as they often reinforce the dependence of employers and migrant workers on these programs. This critical discourse analysis will therefore continue to build upon existing theories by exploring how the agri-food industry engages with and contributes to existing power structures reinforcing Canada's migrant labour system.

4.1 Migrant Workers in Industry Discourse

The *More than a Migrant Worker* campaign places migrant workers and their stories front and centre. Of the 157 text documents collected, 107 are profiles of migrant workers of different backgrounds. These profiles often feature workers describing, in their own words, their experience working on Canadian farms, their family life in their home countries, their motivations for working abroad, and other aspects of their personal stories. These profiles appear to be a key part of the *More than a Migrant Worker* campaign's effort to show to Canadian audiences that there is "more to [migrant workers'] story" (OFVGA, 2024a).

As explained in Chapter 3, however, critical discourse analysis requires that texts be examined closely, with attention paid to intertextual and interdiscursive connections as well as contextual factors such as power structures to inform our understanding of the text's meaning. Even behind a message that many would view as benign or positive, such as *More than a Migrant Worker's* stated intention to thank and celebrate migrant

farm workers, there are underlying subtexts and meanings. I will begin by drawing out some themes about what these industry-generated texts reveal of the lives of migrant workers before connecting these themes back to other discourses on the topic and the framework outlined in my literature review.

4.1.1 Families and Motivation

Well over half of the texts – 121 out of 157 – collected for this critical discourse analysis included some mention of workers’ families and their lives in their home countries. This applies particularly to the profiles of migrant workers found on the *More than a Migrant Worker* website, which almost all featured workers at some point talking about their families.

A common theme throughout this discourse was that migrant workers’ families are central to their motivations for working in Canada, which becomes apparent from numerous instances where workers are shown wanting to create a ‘better life’ for their spouses and children. As one of the workers profiled states, “I came to Canada to make life easier for me and my kids. My dream for my kids is to not live the same life as I do, I want to make it better for them” (OFVGA, 2024n). There is a dual meaning to this quotation that I think speaks to more than what the creators of *More than a Migrant Worker* may have intended. Firstly, there is an affirmation of what many people could probably guess drives most migrant farm workers to come to Canada. This worker’s stated goal to ‘make life easier’ for their family fits in with a narrative that is convenient for industry groups trying to sway public opinion in favour of migrant worker programs. It frames migrant labour as an opportunity for upwards economic mobility for families with

limited means. However, the second part of this quotation about not wanting their children to live the life that they do hints at the undesirability of their situation. The worker who said this may have been thinking of the hardship of leaving home and family behind for months at a time (McLaughlin et al., 2018) or the long, arduous workdays which take a toll on the human body (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019).

These two themes – the lifeline of migrant labour, the great difficulty it involves – appear intertwined across many workers’ statements throughout the collected texts. As one worker puts it, “I come here for the money ... for my family. It’s good. Back home, I have three children. I talk to my wife every day. I miss her” (OFVGA, 2024b). Another worker explains, “I come to Canada because my dream has always been to provide a better standard of living to my family, which I did not have. It is hard to leave the family in Mexico. When I first started coming here, our youngest girl was two years old and my oldest was 8 or 10 years old” (OFVGA, 2024h). These profiles do not shy away from showing the painful experience of leaving family repeatedly for months of every year.

In their own commentary, the authors of these texts acknowledge the difficulty that separation from family causes for migrant workers as well, often framing it as a kind of sacrifice. For example, a sponsored article featured in the *Toronto Star*, titled “A better life is why we come to Canada, say migrant farm workers” presents some information about Canada’s agricultural migrant worker programs before proclaiming: “regardless of their circumstances, though, there’s one thing they all have in common: their motivation for working in Canada is to build a better life for themselves and for their families back home” (*Toronto Star*, 2023, August 16). The article highlights the

experiences of a worker who “though he likes Canada, ... still struggles with being far away from his wife and young son in Mexico” (Toronto Star, 2023, August 16).

Elsewhere in the discourse, industry-generated texts delve further into some of the reasons that workers may choose temporary migration to Canada. Generally, the reasons as stated both by the workers profiled and by industry writers focus on a lack of jobs and economic opportunities in sending countries. As one worker says, “the economy in Mexico is very bad. For this reason, I am coming here” (OFVGA, 2024m). Another worker further explains the contrast in opportunities they see between their home country and Canada: “Back in our country, we just earn enough money for food and to live day by day. By coming here, we are able to make it – like buying a piece of land, buying a house and other things so that my family can be better” (OFVGA, 2024g). These and many other quotations from workers profiled across the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative reinforce the message that migrant labour programs like the TFWP provide opportunities for upward financial mobility to workers who are simply unlucky enough to live in countries or communities that provide few such pathways.

More than a Migrant Worker does not delve into the geopolitical context behind the poverty and lack of economic opportunities that motivates people from lower and middle-income countries to become migrant workers. The underdevelopment of migrant workers’ home countries and the associated lack of jobs and opportunities for them are simply stated without deeper engagement with the underlying causes of global inequality. I recognize that it is obviously unrealistic to expect what is essentially an industry public relations campaign to engage with postcolonial Marxist theory regarding

the impacts of globalization and neoliberalism in driving inequality and creating an exploitable international labour reserve, as I did above in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, I believe the way that the discourse frequently raises the issue of poverty in the Global South in support of current migrant labour policies is worth challenging.

As explained in the literature review, globalization, the international spread of neoliberal policies, and the growth in managed migration systems are intrinsically linked, as international trade agreements have destabilized rural economies and pushed many people in such communities in the Global South towards a state of precarity – the “global reserve army” described in Foster and McChesney (2018, p. 485). The way that industry-generated materials like *More than a Migrant Worker* portray underdevelopment in the Global South makes this appear to be a naturally occurring phenomenon for which no one bears any responsibility. Most importantly, these texts draw no connection between the destabilization of rural communities in source countries through international trade agreements – as well as the neoliberal reforms that countries like the United States and Canada often push for to reach such deals – and the resulting labour surplus which creates a supply of migrant workers.

Without any critical discussion of this context, the economic opportunity presented by migrant labour streams under the TFWP may appear to be an unambiguously positive force, granting jobs and upward mobility to those not fortunate enough to have these things in their home countries. *More than a Migrant Worker* presents the results of this exchange in an overwhelmingly positive light.

The positive economic impacts of remittances from earnings in Canada on workers' families and communities in their home countries are another frequently appearing theme. Many of the workers profiled point to tangible examples of the upward mobility their families have experienced since joining the program, such as children who are now progressing through higher education or houses and vehicles purchased. Others voice aspirations for the better life they plan to build for their families with money earned in Canada. A worker from Thailand explains: "my plan is to make money to build my own business back home ... a cattle farm, open a local store and stay with my family" (OFVGA, 2024k). The positive impacts cited in these texts align closely with what I have found in my previous research with migrant farmworkers in Mexico (Helps, 2020). When visiting the homes of migrant farmworkers for that project, I was invariably shown expansions built onto houses or businesses started with earnings from Canada. The workers I met during that research spoke with pride and excitement about their improved material conditions, much like many of the workers profiled for *More than a Migrant Worker*. As explained in my literature review above, some researchers have also found positive impacts of remittances on the finances of migrant workers and their families (Carvajal & Johnson, 2016), providing support for New Economics of Labour Migration theory in that decisions are made at the household level regarding whether to send a member abroad and how to invest the resulting income to improve their circumstances. Many of the quotations from migrant workers used in the agri-food discourse, with their overwhelming focus on the ability to improve their families' financial position, appear to provide further support for this theory.

The agri-food industry appears to point to the impacts of these remittances, both at the family level and in the broader economy, as a rebuttal to critiques that migrant labour programs like the TFWP are exploitative. In addition to the experiences of the migrant workers quoted above, the discourse sometimes cites academic research to back these claims, for example:

“Studies have also shown that the money migrant workers bring home from their employment in Canada helps bolster the local economies of their home countries, positively impacting the financial stability of workers’ families and their communities. A 2017 study showed, for examples [sic], that SAWP workers from Mexico were sending home approximately \$174 million CDN annually to contribute to their domestic economy” (OFVGA, 2024d).

The figures in the excerpt above, which are cited in a footnote on the *More than a Migrant Worker* webpage, were found in a 2017 report on the SAWP by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) (Budworth et al., 2017), which in turn extracted them from Wells et al. (2014). While the figure of \$174 million is accurate to what was reported in these sources, both Wells et al. (2014) and Budworth et al. (2017) express skepticism of the SAWP’s development impact. While Budworth et al. (2017), who reviewed existing studies on SAWP worker remittances, found a positive correlation between years in the program and ability to buy a home, they also found that remittances rarely reach levels sufficient for investment that would eliminate the need for them to continue working in Canada. Wells et al. (2014), as cited in the literature review in Chapter 2, describe migrant labour as a lifeline for SAWP workers, but find little evidence that it is an effective international development tool. Instead, in Wells et al.’s words, “SAWP remittances help reduce poverty, at least temporarily, to more moderate levels while precarious poverty expands through global neoliberal

underdevelopment” (Wells et al., 2014, p. 144), referring to the chronic underdevelopment instilled in rural regions of sending countries like Mexico through neoliberal economic restructuring. The economic development impact of the SAWP, according to these sources, is therefore more ambiguous than it may appear in the *More than a Migrant Worker* campaign. As I have argued in earlier works, the positive impacts that some individual workers experience from this income source cannot be denied (Helps, 2020). Nonetheless, *More than a Migrant Worker*’s framing of migrant labour programs as an instrument of economic development is incomplete and reveals a point of disagreement between the industry and academic discourses.

Throughout the discourse, however, the purported benefits of migrant labour opportunities for workers, their families, and their communities are accompanied by an acknowledgement of the time that these workers spend away from loved ones. A worker profiled from Trinidad and Tobago puts this trade-off in stark terms:

“I’ve got three beautiful daughters and my mom back home. I make a really big sacrifice coming out here and leaving them. I would like to see them every single day, it’s really hard. Now I can only video chat with them to see them but at the end of the day you have to sacrifice one thing to get to the next. I am trying to make a better life for them” (OFVGA, 2024p).

This quotation is one of many across the profiles included on the *More than a Migrant Worker* website that talks about this separation as a ‘sacrifice’ and expresses the difficulty of being away from close family members, particularly children. These profiles support *More than a Migrant Worker*’s stated intention to share migrant workers’ stories to a wider Canadian audience, as they shed light on one of the negative impacts that migration has on those who participate in these programs. The emotional distress of

separation for migrant workers and their families also aligns with the academic literature reviewed in Chapter 2, though some research has indicated more serious, long-term effects than the mostly temporary pain described in the discourse. As found by McLaughlin et al. (2018), migrant workers' absence can negatively impact their children's mental health, sometimes manifesting in poor school performance and an increased likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviours, drug abuse, and early pregnancies. Notably, McLaughlin et al. (2018) make policy recommendations including higher wages, strengthened labour rights, and opportunities for family reunification to help mitigate these negative impacts of separation. In this respect, the academic literature contrasts with this discourse, which seems to treat separation as an unfortunate but inevitable aspect of migrant labour and proposes no potential changes to mitigate it.

This treatment of migrant workers' financial motivations and feeling of obligation towards their families indicates several ways that the discourse in *More than a Migrant Worker* upholds existing power structures in the face of critiques outlined above. In its repeated assertion that migrant workers and their families benefit from the income generated through remittances, *More than a Migrant Worker* deflects from critical discourses described in Chapter 2 which identify these employment arrangements as exploitative. It does so while ignoring that the dependence of migrants' families on the income provided by remittances, which *More than a Migrant Worker* presents in a seemingly positive light, are a clear contributing factor to exploitation within this system, as presented in the New Economics of Labour Market elements in my theoretical framework.

4.1.2 Migrants in the Workplace

More than a Migrant Worker also describes many aspects of the work performed by migrant farm workers. A common theme throughout the texts analyzed was acknowledgement of the importance of migrant workers to Canadian agricultural production and food systems, often accompanied by statements of gratitude towards the migrant workforce. The organizations behind the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative position this as one of their primary objectives in their website's 'About Us' page: "to thank and support the valuable workers who come here each year to help grow the local food that Ontarians enjoy and value so much" (OFVGA, 2024a). Employers giving thanks to workers is a nice, if somewhat empty, gesture. However, looking closer at what the industry's acknowledgements say about the role of migrant workers in food production and the conditions under which that work takes place reveals more of the narrative the industry presents to readers.

Most notably, *More than a Migrant Worker* – and quotations from many employers profiled – repeatedly makes a point of asserting that migrant workers are essential for Canadian food production systems to operate. As one farm operator remarks, "we couldn't get through picking this crop without these guys ... It's the difference between growing apples and not growing apples" (OFVGA, 2024c). Another employer quotation makes a similar point:

"Quite simply, without international workers, we wouldn't be able to grow many of the fruits and vegetables that Canadians love ... They are critically important to our ability as a country to feed Canadians and ensure we have as much locally grown produce on our shelves as possible" (Schaer, 2021).

These and many similar quotations throughout the discourse convey certain points to the industry's primary audience among the public.

Firstly, *More than a Migrant Worker* appears to communicate that the employment of migrant workers is a necessity for the Canadian agri-food industry and that there is no other way to ensure the viability of agriculture. These statements are reflective of CAHRC's labour market forecasting which I addressed in the literature review, showing that labour shortages will continue to worsen over the course of the current decade (CAHRC, 2019). The topic of a labour shortage comes up frequently throughout *More than a Migrant Worker*. The *More than a Migrant Worker* information sheet explains the issue as follows:

"Seasonal and temporary international farm workers form an essential part of Canada's domestic food supply chain and help Canadian growers address labour needs on their farms. Where possible, farmers always prefer to hire Canadian employees first, but there is a significant gap in the availability of local help. In fact, on-farm jobs in agriculture have one of the highest vacancy rates of any industry in Canada at 5.4 per cent. The labour crunch in horticulture is not new, however. SAWP's origins in Canada date to 1966 when 264 Jamaican workers arrived in Ontario to help with apple harvest. Today, the government-approved program is open to workers from Mexico, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Islands. It is largely because of the tremendous individuals who come to work on Canadian farms through Canada's officially recognized foreign worker programs that Canadians enjoy bountiful shelves of locally grown fruits and vegetables at their grocery stores." (OFVGA, 2024d).

This use of data asserts the existence of a labour shortage that necessitates access to migrant worker programs but leaves many questions about the origin or context of this shortage unanswered. If, as the information sheet insists, farmers prefer to hire Canadian workers, why have they increasingly failed to do so for the past six decades? There is no apparent consideration within the discourse for what the agri-food

industry could do to attract local workers back to agriculture or grow a domestic workforce. To connect this theme back to the theories of migration explored in the literature review, *More than a Migrant Worker* appears to follow something like neoclassical economic theory, presenting a labour shortage in Canada and surplus labour in sending countries as the primary factors driving migration. The discourse shows little consideration for other factors driving labour shortages in agriculture, such as the segmentation of labour markets that suppresses the desirability, pay, and working conditions of agricultural jobs according to Labour Market Segmentation Theory (Grimshaw et al., 2017; Seo, 2021).

The other main theme conveyed through these excerpts has to do with the idea that migrant farm workers are responsible for feeding Canadians – that the public owes the availability of food on Canadian grocery store shelves to migrant labour programs, without which growing local food would be far more difficult or even impossible. The discourse often presents this theme as a show of gratitude and recognition towards migrant farm workers. One post claims, “it is largely because of the tremendous individuals who come to work on Canadian farms ... that Canadians enjoy bountiful shelves of locally grown fruits and vegetables at their grocery stores” (OFVGA, 2024d). Another piece originally appearing in the *Toronto Star* describes farmworkers as “people who are proud of the work they do to feed Canadians” (Toronto Star, 2023, July 5). Some of the workers profiled by *More than a Migrant Worker* echo similar sentiments. One worker argues, “I think Canadians should know that it is an important job that we do. Food is everything to the world, if you don’t grow food then people can’t live” (OFVGA, 2024o). Another is quoted in a *National Post* article: “We do our work with

pride, with care, and we come here to do things right. We are not just workers; we are people who come to give our best to this country, to help our economy, and help Canada's economy" (Schaer, 2022a).

These affirmations of the importance of the role of migrant workers in food production present an important observation: the impact of these workers on Canada's food supply is great, as evidenced by the agri-food sector's increasing reliance on them already demonstrated in the literature review. In the repetition of this observation though, there is an implicit reinforcement of the status quo. While research on employers' attitudes towards migrant labour is limited, other research shows the entrenchment of dominant modes of agricultural production in many farmers' reluctance to proposed alternatives. Beingessner and Fletcher (2019), for example, found that while some smaller-scale farmers are critical of the dominant food production system's propulsion towards large-scale agriculture in Canada, those with large-scale, export-oriented operations often defend against such critiques by expressing pride in industrial agriculture's ability to "feed the world" (p. 133). A similar argument applies to migrant labour discourse in *More than a Migrant Worker*. The repetition of assertions that migrant workers are responsible for feeding Canadians appears to imply that the ability to eat locally grown produce requires acceptance the industry's widespread use of migrant labour practices. This implication that the functioning of our entire food system is dependent on current migrant labour practices further serves to uphold the existing power structures of the TFWP and counter critical perspectives that may challenge the agri-food industry's virtually unlimited access to this workforce.

More than a Migrant Worker also frequently draws attention to the specialized skills and experience that migrant farm workers bring to their jobs in Canada. One blog post on the *More than a Migrant Worker* website provides an explanation of the varied skills that migrant workers bring:

“Unfortunately, many people imagine farm work as being in the field doing the same repetitive task all day. While there can be days like this (similar to many other jobs!), the reality is that there are tons of unique jobs that require different skillsets and levels of experience around the fruit and vegetable farm. From operating harvesters to fixing irrigation systems, migrant farm workers play huge roles on the farms they work at, and in many cases, they involve these specialized tasks” (OFVGA, 2024e).

This excerpt highlights the diversity and technical difficulty of tasks required of migrant farm workers. As mentioned, common farm duties such as operating machinery can require specialist training and years of experience. Elsewhere, the discourse also highlights the depth of experience acquired by many migrant farm workers who return to the same employer year after year. As an industry-developed educators’ resource on the TFWP notes, “some workers have been returning to the same farm for over 30 years, and not only have become highly skilled at what they do but also beloved members of the farm family” (AgScape, n.d., p. 3). These acknowledgments demonstrate awareness in the industry of the value of having the same workers return to work for the same employers repeatedly, as they gain valuable experience and skillsets in the specific tasks associated with a particular farming operation.

While the discourse promotes recognition of the importance, skill, and experience of migrant farm workers, it is unclear to what degree these considerations are reflected in actual employment practices or in the details of Canada’s migrant labour policy. One

area in which Hennebry and Preibisch criticize the SAWP for falling short of established migrant labour best practices is in the “recognition of qualifications and the skills of migrants” (2012, p. 29). They point out that the recruitment and employer matching process of the SAWP does not consider migrants’ qualifications, skill level, or experience, meaning that they are treated as “interchangeable manual labourers” (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012, p. 29). While this observation was made over a decade ago, I have not found evidence that the program has meaningfully changed to better reward or recognize migrant workers’ skills and experience since. As a result, migrant workers who have developed important or specialized skills are likely underpaid for the value of their labour and may not be matched with positions where they would be most productive.

A final theme that emerged regarding the involvement of migrant farm workers in agricultural production concerns the relationship between migrants and their employers. When explaining that many workers return to the same farms repeatedly for many years, the educators’ resource mentioned above states that migrant workers often become “beloved members of the farm family” (AgScape, n.d., p. 3), indicating that relationships between migrant workers and their employers often extend beyond professionalism and towards a kind of friendship. Some of the workers profiled described experiences that appear to support this claim. In the words of one such worker, “It feels like being part of the family. We are not just a worker or only an employee. We are family. They look after us and they take care of us” (OFVGA, 2024f). Such close relationships between employers and migrant workers, to the point of being described as family-like, are to be expected. While a casual observer of the media or

academic discourse around migrant farm workers may get the impression that employers are universally disliked by those working for them, the reality is of course far more nuanced. As I have described in the findings of earlier research, many migrant farm workers do express a positive view of their employers and the opportunity to live in Canada, but nearly all I spoke to for that project had had at least one negative encounter with an employer who denied their rights or otherwise mistreated them (Helps, 2020). There is a tension between these concepts. A theoretical understanding of systemic vulnerabilities of migrant farm workers, combined with the existence of many real-world examples of abusive employer-worker relations, is difficult to reconcile with the fact that many workers speak highly of their employers and the migration program to which they have attached their families' financial stability. The discourse appears to exploit this tension by highlighting the latter concept over the former.

The family-like relationships between some workers and employers highlighted in *More than a Migrant Worker* also cannot be viewed as representative of the experience of all or even a majority. As described in my MSc thesis, workers can find themselves in a wide variety of agricultural operations of different scales, including everything from small family farms where they might work alongside their employer and one or two other migrants to the larger operations typical of Southwestern Ontario where hundreds of workers may be employed by the same farm (Helps, 2020). Workers in the latter situation tended to report little to no direct interaction with the farm owners, making the type of close relationships highlighted in *More than a Migrant Worker* seem unlikely in these contexts. However, such circumstances and the impact on the migrant experience are left unexamined by this initiative.

4.1.3 Migrant Farm Workers Outside of Work

More than a Migrant Worker also explores migrant workers' activities outside of their working hours. Various texts detail the passions, hobbies, friendships, emotions, living conditions, and struggles of migrants, often using their own words. This theme again connects back to *More than a Migrant Worker's* stated intent to share workers' stories to expand public awareness (OFVGA, 2024a). As will be explained in this section, the emerging picture of migrant workers' lives provides some valuable nuance for the reader to understand who migrant workers are but simultaneously downplays some aspects of migrant worker programs that have been subjects of criticism.

A prominent theme across the discourse is that migrant farm workers express generally positive sentiments about life in Canada and their interactions with Canadians. In one worker's words: "Canada has been a country that opens its doors to us and the people are very friendly. They wait for us every year and welcome us as if it is our second home ... It is nice to be here in Canada. I love Canada." (OFVGA, 2024l). Another echoes this sentiment: "I like Canada because the people are very humble. They treat us well and give us work to be able to support our families" (OFVGA, 2024h). There are two main insights in these statements that connect to themes found throughout the discourse. First, in many of the selected texts, migrant workers express positive opinions about Canadians. These include expressions of gratitude for the opportunity to work in Canada and opinions about the character, attitude, or culture of Canadians they have encountered. A line in a sponsored article published in the *National Post* for the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative provides an indication of why the industry may feel it is important to highlight these statements: "Tragedy and

sensation grab headlines, but the real stories of workers ... why they leave their families, and how they feel about Canada and Canadians are not often told" (Schaer, 2022). The framing of this and other such statements positions anything positive expressed by migrant workers in opposition to evidence of systemic problems within Canada's agricultural migrant worker programs. Negative stories that are sometimes presented to the public through news media regarding abuse, health issues, or poor living conditions are consistent with the academic literature presented in Chapter 2. However, the *National Post* article above downplays these negative stories as sensationalist headline grabbing, while presenting selected comments of migrant workers who find Canadians nice as the 'other side' of the story. I will further explain how such reframing plays into the discourse's broader concerns in the latter half of this chapter. Here, I will simply point out that instances of Canadians being nice to migrant workers seem unlikely be published as news, as respect and decency towards others is something I would argue most people consider to be normal and expected.

In any case, despite the positive views expressed by many of the workers profiled for *More than a Migrant Worker*, academic research on migrant farmworkers' experiences interacting with Canadians has shown mixed results. As mentioned in Chapter 2, researchers have highlighted harassment and racism from local residents as persistent issues that migrant workers face in rural communities (Hjalmarson et al., 2015; Preibisch, 2004; Smith, 2015). My own previous work has shown friendships between migrant farmworkers and local residents are relatively rare due to the heavy time demands of farmwork, distance of many farms from nearby population centres, language barriers, and a shortage of opportunities to socialize with Canadians (Helps,

2020). The difficulty for migrant workers of finding social connection and inclusion in host communities in Canada is further supported by the findings of George et al. (2024).

The positive interactions between migrant workers and Canadians highlighted in *More than a Migrant Worker* can therefore be interpreted in several ways. They could be taken at face value, as evidence that some migrant farmworkers form meaningful social relationships within the communities where they work in Canada, something that the literature suggests does occur, although less frequently than the selective sample in *More than a Migrant Worker* might make it seem (George et al., 2024; Helps, 2020). Alternatively, they can be considered within the power relationship inherent to any interactions between migrant farmworkers and the Canadian agri-food industry representatives interviewing them for these profiles. The dependency of these migrant workers and their families on income through the SAWP and TFWP may lead them to try to tell such people – and Canadians more broadly – what they think they want to hear, in this case that Canada is a welcoming and friendly country that they are happy to work in. There is an obvious incentive for the agri-food industry groups behind *More than a Migrant Worker* to amplify the positive experiences of migrant workers in Canadian rural communities and downplay the negative ones. The former align current labour practices with popular national narratives about Canada as a multicultural, post-racial society that welcomes hardworking immigrants of all backgrounds, which may encourage broader support for migrant labour programs, thereby upholding the current power structures that benefit the industry's interests. The latter draw further negative attention to the difficulties migrant farmworkers encounter with social isolation in Canada, opening these structures up to critique.

The discourse also explores the ways that migrant workers spend their time outside of work, including through various activities and forms of cultural expression. There are frequent mentions of workers cooking food from their own cultural backgrounds. For example, an article published in *The Grower* and on the *More than a Migrant Worker* website showcases new living facilities built at a Niagara farm. In particular, the article highlights a new kitchen:

“‘I feel like a master chef in this kitchen,’ says a grinning Victor Lugo whose favourite dish is chilaquiles – a Mexican tortilla stuffed with green or red salsa, pulled chicken, cheese, refried beans and scrambled eggs. ‘I love all the tools here and the stainless steel kitchen is easy to clean’” (Davidson, 2023).

This excerpt communicates two important messages about migrant farm workers’ experiences in Canada. First, it shows migrant workers retaining and expressing their culture through food while living abroad. Secondly, it communicates that this is made possible through the investment of their employers in improved living facilities. In addition to cooking, *More than a Migrant Worker* highlights other forms of cultural expression involving migrant farmworkers, including their celebration of Christmas traditions, playing musical instruments, and competing in local soccer tournaments. Such articles show positive moments in migrant workers’ lives in Canada, reinforcing a message that workers’ material conditions are not unreasonably bad, but may also elicit an emotional connection in readers to encourage positive views of migrant workers who may engage in many of the same activities they enjoy.

The generally positive image of migrants’ lives in Canada presented by *More than a Migrant Worker* is consistent with some of the findings from my earlier work with

migrant farmworkers, who told me of how some employers have supported migrant farm workers with improved living facilities and opportunities for participation in community events in Canada (Helps, 2020). It is worth noting, though, that during that same research there were interview participants who recalled employers dismissing requests for basic improvements to workers' living facilities or failing to provide opportunities for cultural expression and community participation. Most of the participants in that study expressed that it was difficult to form friendships within the communities where they stayed in Canada primarily due to a lack of free time and distance from population centres. Other academic literature has also described a more complicated relationship between migrant farm workers and local residents in rural communities, including some examples of support for migrant farm workers in these communities, but also evidence of hostility and discrimination against migrants (George et al., 2024). The mostly positive description of migrant farm workers' interactions with Canadians in *More than a Migrant Worker* does not necessarily conflict with this research, as it is evident that in many cases friendship or at least peaceful coexistence do occur. Nonetheless, there are challenges in this area that the discourse mostly leaves out.

4.2 Agricultural Migrant Labour and Interdiscursive Conflict

The presentation of migrant farm workers that emerges from *More than a Migrant Worker* is obviously selective and, to my knowledge, the organizations behind this initiative have not claimed otherwise. It should not be surprising that these groups, who represent many agri-food businesses that employ migrant workers, appear to have used their platform to present these issues in a way that is beneficial to their current business

models. The findings presented so far in this chapter begin to reveal *More than a Migrant Worker's* narrative about migrant farm workers. This narrative portrays migrant labour as a mutually beneficial arrangement for both employers and workers but does not question who benefits more or the root causes that led to this arrangement in the first place. *More than a Migrant Worker* portrays the difficulty of separation from home and family but also presents workers as happy with their situation and emphasizes their positive views of Canada and Canadians. In the following sections, I will expand on these tensions by identifying some of the interdiscursive themes that emerged from my analysis – the ways in which *More than a Migrant Worker* responds to concerns raised by discourses surfacing in media and academic literature, and how these interactions can further our understanding of these industry groups' concerns regarding public opinion on migrant labour.

4.2.1 Migrant Worker Health, Housing, and the Pandemic

Based on my analysis of the collected texts, the agri-food industry groups behind *More than a Migrant Worker* are concerned about discourses that have emerged around migrant worker health, particularly in the context of how the industry handled the COVID-19 pandemic. In Chapter 2, I explained that the pandemic brought many long-simmering issues in Canada's temporary migration system to greater public attention through media reporting on the rampant spread of COVID-19 through the migrant worker population, as well as heightened vulnerabilities and restrictions for this already precarious group. The pandemic appears to have been a turning point for how the agri-food industry sees public discourse on migrant labour and may have triggered their decision to take a more active role in shaping said discourse through initiatives such as

More than a Migrant Worker. As an article describing how the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative started explains, “when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it became even more important to get the right messaging out to the public” (Denard, 2022).

There are two main areas where the agri-food industry generates discourse about issues pertaining to the pandemic. The first I will discuss is the impact of COVID-19 on agri-food production and food security before turning to the impacts on migrant workers’ rights and conditions. A sponsored article in the *National Post* hints at the discourse’s narrative concerning migrant workers during the pandemic:

“When travel restrictions early on in the pandemic put a temporary halt to international worker arrivals, it created some tense weeks for growers and others in the Canadian produce industry until the issue was resolved. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of countries being self-sufficient in everything from manufacturing to food production, and although Canada’s climate means not all foods can be grown at home, food security is a top-of-mind-issue” (Schaer, 2021).

In this excerpt, the writer presents the pandemic as an example of why the TFWP is essential, not just to the profitability of the agri-food industry, but to Canadian food security. Framing migrant labour in these terms aligns the preservation of these programs with national interests and follows a pattern explained above of implicating Canadian citizens and residents in the agri-food migration system. With this connection between migrant labour and food security, there is an implication that Canadians who benefit from the products of this system – in which, given that food is a necessity, they have little choice – should not criticize said system. A subsequent article from the same writer reiterates this connection, claiming “it wasn’t until the COVID-19 pandemic ... that more Ontarians started to become aware of just how dependent fruit and vegetable

production in this province is on these seasonal workers” (Schaer, 2022), further indicating how these sponsored articles underline a link between migrant labour and food security for readers in the Canadian public. In forming this link, the discourse counters critiques which challenge industry’s power in influencing migration policy and question the necessity and/or ethics of allowing unfettered access to this labour source.

This discourse presents the pandemic as proof of the need for continued support for Canada’s agricultural migrant labour programs. However, it could also be argued that the disruptions to food production from increased border restrictions and the spread of illness on farms reveals a precarity in the industry’s dependence on migrant labour. Agri-food production was profoundly impacted by the onset of the pandemic but recovered quickly after the Canadian government acted to ensure the inflow of migrant workers could resume (Helps et al., 2022). According to CAHRC, the labour shortages associated with the interruption to migrant workers’ travel resulted in a \$2.9 billion loss for the industry, or 4.2 per cent of total yearly sales (CAHRC, 2021). That such a large drop in productivity could result from a relatively short-term disruption (as travel restrictions for migrant farm workers were removed and arrangements to transport them were made within weeks) could be seen as cause for caution against further reliance on international migrant labour in Canada’s food system. After all, the world does not appear much safer from global threats in 2025 than it did in 2020, considering the continued evolution of potential pandemic-causing pathogens (Peacock et al., 2025), rising global conflict and instability (Brennan & Durmaz, 2024), and the ever-growing threat of climate change (Islam, 2025). It is not unreasonable to expect that another COVID-scale disruption to international travel could occur in the future and interrupt the

regular flow of migrant workers for longer than what Canada experienced in early 2020. In the texts that I collected for this discourse analysis, I found no strong evidence that the agri-food industry is preoccupied by such risks.

While asserting that the pandemic revealed agricultural migrant labour's true importance to Canadians, *More than a Migrant Worker* simultaneously undertakes a careful effort to deflect criticisms that the use of migrant labour has faced in the years since. As explained in Chapter 2, media reporting and academic research at the time highlighted many areas of concern, including the rapid spread of COVID-19 among vulnerable migrant workers, the inadequacy of existing housing to put in place health measures such as social distancing, and the increased opportunity for abuse and isolation. The industry is aware of the unique vulnerabilities of migrant farmworkers during the pandemic. An educator's resource prepared by AgScape and Farm & Food Care Ontario identifies how "temporary foreign workers ... have been found to be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 due to congregate living accommodations and sometimes working environments that require close contact" (AgScape, n.d., p. 6). However, across the 27 other texts from the discourse which included content related to the pandemic, none were found to directly acknowledge the specific vulnerabilities of migrant farmworkers to COVID-19. I found no mention, for example, of the many hundreds of infections and several deaths due to COVID-19 that occurred on Ontario farms in 2020 (Helps et al., 2022). Instead, there appear to be two main ways in which the industry addresses the impacts of COVID-19 on the migrant farm worker population: firstly, by highlighting initiatives (whether by employers or by other groups) to help migrant workers during the pandemic; secondly, by citing the formal rights of migrant

workers and regulations placed on employers in defense of the industry's handling of the pandemic.

More than a Migrant Worker highlights the ways that some employers took proactive steps in response to the pandemic, often presented as things employers did under their own initiative out of concern for workers. This includes the improvement or construction of new housing mentioned earlier. One agri-food representative is quoted describing employers' "significant investments into housing upgrades in the last several years to ensure workers have safe, comfortable living spaces" (Schaer, 2023) as an example of how the industry was responding to the pandemic. Housing appears to be a particularly sensitive topic for the agri-food industry, so much so that the *More than a Migrant Worker* website features a post about growers "pushing back on recent allegations of poor housing standards and lax inspections around employer-provided housing for seasonal agricultural workers" (OFVGA, 2021). Strangely, this post does not mention what specific allegations have been made against growers or by whom. A key element of the defense of the industry's housing practices towards migrant farm workers is that this is already a highly regulated matter. As the writers explain,

"Housing is built, occupied and operated according to official fire and building codes and local public health standards. All housing is supervised and inspected by federal government officials, local public health units, and liaison officers from the SAWP workers' home countries. If there are any issues with housing, anonymous reports can be made to the federal government or liaison officers for appropriate investigation" (OFVGA, 2021).

The description above is a more or less accurate description of the regulatory oversight regime regarding migrant farm worker housing. To reiterate an earlier point, though, it is unclear which critics the *More than a Migrant Worker* writers are responding to with

these facts, as I am not aware of any prominent voices in migrant workers' rights discourses that claim there is no oversight of migrant worker housing. For example, Caxaj et al.'s (2024) scoping review found that it is despite existing oversight mechanisms that health hazards such as poor sanitation, electrical and thermal hazards, air quality, and a lack of privacy persist in migrant worker housing. Specific issues they identify in the oversight regime include its dependence on a mostly complaints-based mechanism that migrant workers are likely reluctant to use despite the formal provisions of anonymity and protection they may be offered. Caxaj et al.'s (2024) critique of the current oversight regime is further supported by a 2021 report of the Auditor General of Canada which concluded that the federal government's efforts to inspect migrant worker housing during the pandemic were "poorly executed and provided little assurance that temporary foreign workers in Canada' agricultural sector were protected" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2021). By contrast, *More than a Migrant Worker* presents the rights of migrant workers and oversight mechanisms for employer compliance in a way that appears to dismiss concerns about the health and safety of migrant farm worker housing while largely ignoring any questions about the upholding of these rights and regulations or the actual effectiveness of currently existing oversight mechanisms. This repeated assertion of the adequacy of the current regulatory structure in protecting workers' rights further serves to uphold the existing power of employers over workers, as strengthened oversight mechanism might provide more confidence for workers to challenge exploitative practices.

Nonetheless, the discourse does, at times, touch on the ongoing evolution of this oversight regime, mentioning in several texts the federal government's work to

implement a national housing standard for migrant farm workers. In an FAQ page on the *More than a Migrant Worker* website, one section provides some insight into the industry's position on the development of new regulations:

“Farmers have been actively participating in government consultations around improvements to worker housing. They’re asking for a consistent and evidence-based housing standard that builds on existing rules and prioritizes public health. At the same time, it must be nimble enough to allow farmers, workers and public health professionals to make necessary adjustments in real-time to keep workers and the public safe in the event of future pandemics or public health emergencies” (OFVGA, 2024q).

Here, the industry groups behind *More than a Migrant Worker* display an openness towards regulation but place notable caveats on the kind of regulation they would support. The fact that agri-food groups are ‘actively participating’ in the consultation on regulation development is unsurprising given the history of employer advocacy in this policy area described in Chapter 2. There are key terms in this excerpt that hint at the nature of the agri-food industry's interest in this matter. Terms such as ‘evidence-based’ leave open the opportunity to reject proposed measures on the grounds that the industry does not consider the evidence of their necessity sufficient. It is not clear what kind of evidence the industry would consider to justify increased requirements on agri-food employers. There are other instances where the discourse hints at apprehensions about regulations becoming overly burdensome which may signal an interest in pushing back on measures advocated for by public health officials. An article from *More than a Migrant Worker*, originally published in *The Rural Voice*, quotes an employer describing some grievances with the push for more stringent housing standards:

“‘Housing has become a real dog’s breakfast,’ he said of wild accusations by certain groups ‘advocating about things that just aren’t true.’ He suggested the government seems to be listening to activists rather than farmers and the workers themselves.” (Russell, 2023)

I will delve further into the idea of advocacy groups spreading misinformation around migrant farm workers in a later section. Here I would like to focus on the notion that the government is ‘listening to activists’ when it comes to the treatment of migrant farm workers, as it relates to the call for ‘evidence-based’ housing regulations coming from the agri-food industry. What is meant by ‘listening to activists’ is vague, as it appears to me that most of the core demands of groups such as Justicia for Migrant Workers or even workers’ rights-focused academic researchers such as Hennebry and Preibisch (2012) have not yet made reality, including ideas such as providing migrant workers with permanent residency or a more permissive work permit. To connect this idea back to calls for ‘evidence-based’ requirements, I could not find an example throughout the discourse of a specific migrant worker housing policy that employers or employer-representing groups believe to contradict public health expertise.

It is also important to note the caveat about housing regulations needing to be ‘consistent’ in the excerpt above (OFVGA, 2024q). An interest in a clear housing standard across Canada to reduce inconsistency between subnational jurisdictions is repeatedly mentioned throughout the discourse. One article addressing the efforts of employers to build new worker housing asserts that “if a grower has issues with inspections, it’s usually because of challenges with local municipal officials who have a say over the approval of the housing ... Because of this, the housing inspection experience can vary greatly from municipality to municipality” (Davidson, 2023). This

variability in housing requirements across different public health units appears to be one of the industry's main frustrations in the current regulatory environment and a possible reason for their push towards greater public outreach and policy input in the years since the onset of the pandemic. Their requests for consistency makes sense considering the great efforts to which industry groups have gone to streamline the use of migrant farm worker programs for employers through services provided by organizations like FARMS. It is likely made more difficult for such an organization to take on much of the administrative burden for employers if there are dozens of different standards across the country. This is likely a key factor in the industry groups' apparent engagement in the ongoing evolution of national standards. It is not simply that they want specific policies that are friendlier towards employers' interests (though this may be another factor) but rather that the creation of a single standard itself may provide greater certainty and lower costs and risks of employing migrant workers for their members. The benefits for the industry of a more consistent migrant worker housing regulatory framework are also supported by academic literature indicating that the current patchwork approach has been an obstacle in the construction of migrant worker housing to promote health and inclusion (Oyewale, 2024).

I would also like to return to the earlier excerpt's emphasis on a need for regulations to be "nimble enough to allow farmers, workers and public health professionals to make necessary adjustments in real-time to keep workers and the public safe in the event of future pandemics or public health emergencies" (OFVGA, 2024q). There is some merit to this concern as future public health emergencies could present in ways that require the rapid adaptation of existing migrant worker housing, as

the agri-food industry experienced with the need to provide for greater distancing between workers to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, it is important to consider that researchers have raised concerns about the health impacts of poor sanitation, ventilation, and spaciousness of worker housing since before the pandemic (Aguilar et al., 2011; Caxaj & Cohen, 2019), much of which is consistent with post-pandemic recommendations regarding a potential standard (Barnetson et al., 2020). It is therefore reasonable to expect that a set of minimum requirements could be established that would improve the health of migrant farm workers generally, prepare for potential future health threats, and anticipate that additional needs for further measures might arise.

4.2.2 Agri-Food Industry Discourse on Migrant Workers' Rights

Connected to the agri-food discourse's preoccupation with narratives that have emerged from the pandemic is an apparent concern about the industry's workers' rights record more broadly and how the treatment of migrant farm workers is represented to the public in other discourses. Across many of the texts collected, the discourse identifies popular ideas about the agri-food industry's migrant labour practices that it claims are inaccurate or outright false. These statements occur to such a degree that correcting supposed misinformation emerged as one of the core themes of the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative.

To illustrate this theme, there is an entire page on OGVG's website (with links to the *More than a Migrant Worker site*) dedicated to "Misconceptions about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker

Program (SAWP)” (OGVG, 2020). This page follows a direct approach, posing questions meant to represent purported misconceptions about migrant farm workers, followed by information the writers have identified as facts to debunk them. For example:

“Is it true that greenhouse workers are paid less than minimum wage? FACT: SAWP/TFWP rules and regulations guarantee that international workers are paid minimum wage or better – in greenhouses and all other areas of agriculture. It is the law” (OFVGA, 2020).

There is nothing false in this statement. It is true that SAWP and TFWP employers are required by law to pay migrant workers the higher of either the minimum wage in the province where they work or a federally set minimum wage for working with a particular commodity. However, the agri-food industry’s argument defending migrant labour practices again focuses on the formal existence of rights and protections for migrant farm workers and mostly ignores the findings of academic and journalistic research that show abuses and mistreatment – and disregard for laws – are a persistent problem despite those rights.

This pattern is repeated throughout the text. To provide another example from the *More than a Migrant Worker* page on misconceptions about migrant worker programs:

“Are agricultural workers respected by their employers? FACT: Many international workers return to the same farm year after year. In some cases, multiple generations and/or family members had returned to the same farm. In many cases relationships are built and friendships are formed” (OFVGA, 2020).

Again, the above excerpt is, from what I can tell, factual. It is true that many migrant farm workers return to the same workplace year after year, sometimes for a decade or more, and in many cases form positive working relationships with employers

(Helps, 2020). However, this ignores the context that might lead such a question to be raised in the first place, which is that research has shown that verbal, physical, and sexual abuse by employers against migrant workers continue to be recurring issues and are enabled by the structural vulnerability of workers built into the program itself (Sarapura et al., 2023), even if most employers do indeed treat workers with respect. Migrant workers have little control over which workplace they are placed with and tend to prioritize potential income above most other factors, including their relationship with their employer (Helps, 2020). Given these constraints, workers may determine, quite reasonably, that staying with the same employer presents fewer risks than seeking a new position elsewhere. There is therefore little reason to consider a general preference for remaining with one employer as evidence of respectful working relationships or refuting the existence of systemic abuse within the TFWP.

More than a Migrant Worker repeatedly insists, accurately, that migrant farm workers have rights. For example, a sponsored article in the *National Post* asserts that “SAWP workers have the same rights and privileges as Canadian workers, including minimum wage, health care, workplace insurance coverage and access to employment insurance as soon as they arrive” (Schaer, 2022). The specific claims here – that migrant farm workers are entitled to minimum wage, public health, and insurance coverage – are true. However, the argument they are used to advance – that migrant farm workers have ‘the same rights and privileges as Canadian workers’ – is flawed. Firstly, it is flawed because, as explained above, formal rights do not necessarily result in real-world protection from abuse of those rights. For example, while migrant workers are entitled to public health care in Canada under current policy, researchers note

systemic barriers to accessing healthcare, such as language, lack of means to travel, or fear of consequences for taking time off from work (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019; McLaughlin & Tew, 2018). The rights highlighted in the *National Post* piece above appear to be presented as evidence against claims that migrant workers do not have a formal right to public healthcare in Canada. However, I have not seen any serious researchers or advocacy groups make such a claim, which would be obviously false. The second flaw with the argument in the above *National Post* piece is that in other areas, migrant farm workers evidently do not have all the same rights or privileges as Canadians. They do not have the right, for example, to freely seek employment at another workplace, being restricted to the one identified in their closed work permit. Their time-limited visas do not offer them the right enjoyed by citizens and permanent residents to stay indefinitely. Nor do they have the right enjoyed by many groups of temporary and permanent residents of Canada to apply for close family members to accompany them. These differences clearly mark migrant workers as a different class under Canadian immigration and labour law that has substantially different rights than those afforded to other classes. They are also, as noted in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, among the policies most responsible for the unbalanced power dynamics between workers and employers under the TFWP. This makes their absence from *More than a Migrant Worker's* discussion of worker's rights conspicuous, as they are central to the most prominent critiques challenging employers' power within the current policy structure.

More than a Migrant Worker's repeated insistence on these points leads me to question why they are apparently so concerned about public understanding of the terms offered to migrant farm workers under an area of federal government policy towards

which the public shows mostly ambivalence. Perhaps there is a concern that reports of mistreatment of migrant workers in the news have run wild in the public's imagination, but this seems unlikely to me, as public engagement on this topic is still relatively low, as evidenced by the broad public support for employment of migrant workers in agriculture (IRCC, 2024). Nonetheless, there is an evident concern for public perception of the industry's labour practices that is driving much of the current discourse.

I wonder if, while the apparent target audience of much of the discourse is the general public, it is also motivated, in part, to appease agri-food industry employers (who comprise the membership of groups behind *More than a Migrant Worker*) who have responded negatively to external critiques in the post-COVID era. While I still contend that the public is largely disinterested in these matters, increased scrutiny from outsiders in media, academia, government and international organizations may have created a perception among agri-food groups and their members that the industry is under attack and that current power structures of the TFWP which benefit them may therefore be threatened. Though the attitudes of industry group members towards external criticism of migrant labour practices is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this presents an interesting potential line of inquiry for further research involving this group.

An example of such outside critique that is referenced several times *across More than a Migrant Worker* are the findings released by Tomoya Obakata, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, upon his visit to Canada and investigation into the TFWP (Obakata, 2024). Obakata's final report cites many of the

concerns already well known to the academic literature, including the structural vulnerability of migrant workers under closed work permits, the social isolation and poor access to services that workers often experience, and the complaint-driven mechanism behind most workplace inspections, concluding that Canada's temporary migration system "serves as a breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery, as it institutionalizes asymmetries of power that favour employers and prevent workers from exercising their rights" (Obakata, 2024, p. 5). Obakata's findings met with sharp rebukes from many in the agri-food industry. Following the release of the Special Rapporteur's End of Mission Statement (Obokata, 2023) which previewed the findings of the report quoted above, an article was published on *Canadian Grocer* presenting a response from agri-food industry groups (Canadian Grocer Staff, 2023). A representative of the industry is quoted making the following statement:

"We recognize there is always more that can be done to ensure all workers have the opportunity for a positive and safe working experience while they are here, but assigning hateful and broad labels to all the hardworking farmers and their employees in the program is not the solution" (Canadian Grocer Staff, 2023).

Two messages are conveyed with this statement in defense of the industry's labour practices. First, there is a recognition of 'more that can be done' which echoes similar statements made elsewhere in the discourse, including a section from the *More than a Migrant Worker* 'About Us' Page quoted earlier: "We'll be honest: we know there are incidents where workers aren't being treated properly or are subject to unacceptable living or working conditions" (OFVGA, 2024a). In this way, the discourse acknowledges that mistreatment of migrant farm workers sometimes occurs while setting aside any

systemic causes of this problem or potential measures to curtail it that would create a burden for agri-food employers.

The other part of this statement – about ‘assigning hateful and broad labels to all the hardworking farmers and their employees’ – appears to overstate the actual substance of the Special Rapporteur’s statement. The Special Rapporteur’s central claim about migrant farm workers was that current policies make them “vulnerable to contemporary forms of slavery” (Obokata, 2023, p. 3), which was informed by the nature of their closed work permits, employers’ control over their housing, and first-hand reporting of poor working and living conditions by migrant farm workers themselves. The Special Rapporteur does not claim that all agricultural employers are engaged in abuse against migrant workers or that all migrant workers experience contemporary forms of slavery, but rather that the current policy structure of the TFWP and SAWP creates conditions where such abuses can occur. The full report, released the following year, which upholds and expands on these findings, approvingly acknowledges the industry’s 94 per cent compliance rate in government inspections. The findings of the Special Rapporteur are broadly aligned with much of the existing academic literature, which has shown that while many employers treat workers fairly, or at least follow applicable laws, those who choose not to are enabled by a policy structure that places disproportionate power over employees into their hands (Basok & Belanger, 2016; Helps, 2020; Weiler et al., 2016). The Special Rapporteur’s statements, along with much of the academic literature, therefore, do not constitute the broad condemnation of agri-food employers that the discourse appears to be so defensive about.

Industry groups' reception of the Special Rapporteur's findings can be contrasted with the way they have embraced the publication of another report following an investigation by the Jamaican government into the SAWP in 2023. The Jamaican report highlights that majorities of the migrant workers surveyed for the investigation reported satisfaction on a range of factors including treatment by their employers and housing (Samuda, 2023). These findings are also consistent with the academic literature on migrant farm workers and the Special Rapporteur's report, though the way that the Jamaican report frames these findings is somewhat more positive. Neither the consensus of the literature surveyed in Chapter 2 nor the Special Rapporteur's report identify all or even a majority of workplaces employing migrant farmworkers as abusive. The consensus, rather, is that abuse and mistreatment are persistent problems that are enabled by the current policy structure. The existence of abuse and mistreatment in a substantial minority of cases can still indicate the presence of a systemic problem.

For example, according to the Jamaican report, 71.8 per cent of respondents considered their employer's treatment to be good or very good, with 90.1 per cent reporting that the treatment they received was at least fair. While this shows most of the respondents did not report feeling unfairly treated by their employer, it still leaves almost 10 per cent that ranked their treatment lower than fair (Samuda, 2023). Similarly, the report highlights that over 70 per cent of surveyed workers approved of their housing conditions, leaving over a quarter that found them substandard (Samuda, 2023). This places the number of workers who encounter problems with their workplace in the minority, but it is still a substantial minority and, as found in earlier research, the

potential for serious abuse and mistreatment in this minority of cases is quite high because of these workers' vulnerability (Helps, 2020).

The findings of the Jamaican report do not conflict with those of the Special Rapporteur. However, the Jamaican report shows up several times in *More than a Migrant Worker* as a form of vindication for Canada's migrant labour system. In particular, the discourse highlights how the report "categorically states that no evidence was found to support activist claims that the program's working conditions were akin to systemic slavery" (OFVGA, 2023a). The claim referred to here appears to be from an open letter to the Jamaican government written by migrant workers with support from advocacy group Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, which reportedly stated that the SAWP constituted systematic slavery (Raza, 2022), though I was unable to locate the text of the letter itself. While the central claim of this letter differs quite notably from that of the Special Rapporteur – that the TFWP and SAWP create conditions that could enable contemporary forms of slavery – this nuance may seem obscure or irrelevant to an employer who already feels defensive about migrant labour practices or to a casual observer who reads little about migrant labour on Canadian farms aside from an occasional headline. I cannot speak to the basis of the claims made in the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change letter or the specific circumstances that informed the workers who wrote it. However, what the discourse's treatment of the reports by the Special Rapporteur and by the Jamaican government indicates to me is that these agri-food industry groups may be becoming increasingly sensitive to outside critique, distinguishing less between criticism of the systemic issues with Canadian migrant labour policy and criticism of the agri-food industry itself.

More than a Migrant Worker does not ignore or deny the existence of abuse or mistreatment of migrant workers. However, my critical discourse analysis did find that these concerns are often redirected away from migrant labour streams under the TFWP. A sponsored article in the *National Post* titled “Government-regulated programs key to employment protections for migrant farm workers” (Schaer, 2023) provides an example of this redirection. A passage from the article states

“A widespread misconception that gets frequent media and public attention is that these programs leave migrant farm workers without adequate employment-related rights and protections. Unfortunately, that’s because there are also migrant workers who are undocumented and without legal work permits, which leaves them vulnerable to mistreatment, regardless of which sector of the economy they work in” (Schaer, 2023).

The article appears to contend that criticism of the TFWP is primarily due to the media and general public’s conflation of these regulated streams with unregulated, illegal forms of migrant labour. This contradicts the academic consensus described in Chapter 2, which is that these programs do not adequately protect migrant workers from abuses of their rights, separately from the vulnerabilities experienced by undocumented migrants in Canada (Cohen, 2019; Basok et al., 2022; Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012; McLaughlin & Hennebry 2013). The concerns about undocumented forms of migrant labour appear in other articles and posts, including one on the *More than a Migrant Worker* webpage that mentions how “governments at the federal and provincial level have made it a priority to prevent the exploitation of these undocumented people and the farming sector is fully supportive of this aim” (OFVGA, 2023b). *More than a Migrant Worker* is clear in its condemnation of the employment of undocumented migrant labour, and for good reason. Undocumented workers in Canada are highly vulnerable to

various forms of abuse and coercion and lack almost all access to social services (Alcaraz et al., 2023), making them more precarious than migrant workers who enter through a recognized stream under the TFWP. It is therefore correct, from a workers' rights perspective, for *More than a Migrant Worker* to identify the regulatory framework provided by Canada's migrant worker programs as preferable to unregulated hiring of migrant workers who have no legal status. However, this does not detract from the serious systemic problems with the current temporary migration framework identified by a robust academic consensus.

4.3 Discussion: Discourse, Misconceptions, and Narratives of Agricultural Migrant Labour

The sections above have presented many of the themes encountered through the critical discourse analysis of the *More than a Migrant Worker*, first by exploring some of the ways in which the discourse portrays the lives and experiences of workers and secondly by discussing some of the ways that the discourse interacts and often conflicts with academic research and other sources of critique. Throughout the selected texts, there were many instances where the discourse called out alleged misinformation or falsehoods about migrant labour practices in the agri-food industry. Often, however, it is unclear what the source of the supposed misinformation is. A good example comes from a *More than a Migrant Worker* "fact and information sheet" (OFVGA, 2024d). This text is broken up into sections with different headings. The first section concerns the UN Special Rapporteur's statements mentioned above and the industry's response pushing back against them. The fact sheet does not directly contradict any of the findings of the report but simply states that the fruit and vegetables sector hires 20,000 workers legally

through the TFWP each year. The following section, titled “mistreatment and exploitation of migrant farm workers” recognizes that undocumented migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation (leaving out the vulnerability of migrant workers with legal status under the TFWP or SAWP) before asserting that “spreading incorrect or incomplete information about hardworking temporary foreign farm workers and their employers is not acceptable” (OFVGA, 2024d). It is not specified in this section which information is being referred to as incorrect or incomplete, nor what groups or individuals are responsible for spreading it. However, this statement’s proximity to the previous section about the UN Special Rapporteur’s statements could lead the reader to interpret that the Rapporteur’s report was the source of misinformation being referred to. This vagueness about what the industry considers to be incorrect or incomplete casts doubt on these and similar critiques which challenge existing power structures in the TFWP without *More than a Migrant Worker* having to single out or refute any specific arguments.

This is not the only instance where the discourse casts doubt on critiques of migrant labour programs while remaining vague about the sources or substance of said critiques. Take, for example, a passage from one of the sponsored *National Post* articles: “Critics of [the SAWP] suggest it lacks oversight, and that workers are subjected to long hours with few, if any rights. That’s not the case for SAWP workers, say organizations who have spent decades working with migrant farm workers and their employers” (Schaer, 2022). The critics claiming workers have few or no rights are not identified in the article, potentially casting suspicion on anyone criticizing the SAWP, whether from an academic, journalistic, or advocacy background. The specific claim

being argued against in the article – that migrant workers have few or no rights – is one that could be easily disproven, but also not one that a serious critic of Canada’s migrant labour policies would be likely to make. Established critiques of the SAWP and TFWP tend to recognize that while migrant workers have rights under the terms of the program – rights to a minimum wage and public healthcare, for example – as well as constitutional rights and freedoms afforded to any person within Canadian jurisdiction – such as life, liberty, and security of the person – there are structural power imbalances resulting from their temporary migration status, closed work permit, and living arrangements (among other factors) that may limit their ability to assert some of these rights (Binford A., 2019; Caxaj & Cohen, 2019; Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012). While there may be some who claim, falsely, that migrant farm workers have ‘few, if any rights’ it seems unlikely that such a claim would be taken seriously in academic or policy discussions.

The focus on correcting purported falsehoods or misconceptions about migrant workers throughout the discourse appears to be more of a strategy to sway public opinion towards a particular narrative about migrant farm workers, rather than an attempt to engage with and debunk instances of misinformation. Based on the findings I have presented in earlier sections of this chapter, one can piece together an idea of *More than a Migrant Worker’s* narrative and what it tells us about these industry groups’ concerns regarding how agricultural migrant labour may be viewed by the public.

This narrative appears intended to communicate that migrant labour programs are beneficial to migrant workers, something that is evident from the emphasis on

migrant workers' stories about their families' upward social mobility due to remittances from working in Canada. Secondly, it stresses that they are essential to the viability of Canadian agriculture and food production, tying these programs to the interests of *More than a Migrant Worker's* intended readership amongst the Canadian public and potentially tapping into feelings of nationalism with messaging about 'feeding Canadians'. Thirdly, it emphasizes the existence of a regulatory framework that provides certain rights to migrant workers, places requirements on employers to follow policies established by the government, and creates forms of investigation and enforcement to address and deter abuses. In short, the presented narrative is of a system that is mutually beneficial to migrants and employers alike, and which results in few, if any, downsides despite the critical media coverage it has received.

The basic details of this narrative are mostly true, at least technically. While the power of remittances to lift families out of poverty is a matter of some debate, few researchers would argue that migrant workers and their families would be better off without this income stream. To the contrary, researchers have highlighted the essential role of foreign income in the sustenance of migrant workers and their families (Wells et al, 2014) and their potential to improve access to education and investment capital (Carvajal & Johnson, 2016). While I questioned the root causes of the agri-food industry's labour shortages in my literature review, the reality that migrant labour currently forms an integral part of the current food production system for which there is no readily available alternative is well established (CAHRC, 2019; Mussell, 2014). As for the regulations that come with official migrant labour streams under the TFWP, it is again true that employers are legally bound to uphold certain rights with respect to their

workers or face potential consequences, though the adequacy of this regulatory regime is something that researchers have challenged (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021; Weiler & Grez, 2022).

While there are not many clear disagreements on the facts of migrant labour, the agri-food industry appears to strategically emphasize or de-emphasize certain things depending on whether it promotes the narrative outlined above. *More than a Migrant Worker* emphasizes the experiences of the many migrant workers who are reasonably happy or at least report no major complaints about their jobs while de-emphasizing the serious complaints of others, some of which point to systemic policy failures. Many of the selected texts present positive relationships between employers and workers or reasonably comfortable-looking housing as though these are newsworthy stories rather than just a level of decency and care that should be expected in these situations. The industry promotes a 94 per cent federal inspection compliance rate – “above-average ... compared to other sectors that use the Temporary Foreign Worker program” (Wilhelm, 2023) – with no mention of what occurred in the 6 per cent of inspections that did not meet compliance or whether the inspection mechanisms being used are even effective in identifying substandard workplaces. Even if many agri-food employers treat migrant workers they employ with decency and respect for their rights, this should not be viewed as surprising or remarkable and does not contradict the many criticisms that have been leveled against migrant labour policies by academic researchers and migrant’s rights advocates, as abuses occurring in a minority of cases can still constitute a systemic problem.

I am not suggesting that the industry should not highlight the stories of migrant farm workers and agri-food employers or push back against misinformation or criticism that they believe to be unfair. However, my concern is that the consistent de-emphasis of problems with the Canada's migrant labour system that leave workers vulnerable to abuse combined with repeated allusions to unnamed outsiders alleged to be spreading misinformation about the agri-food industry may limit possibilities for productive multi-stakeholder discussions about how to ensure adequate protections for migrant workers in the future. For these discussions to lead to actual effective change, there needs to first be a recognition of the systemic failures that the academic consensus indicates persist.

In summary, based on my critical discourse analysis of the selected texts, it could be said that the *More than a Migrant Worker* provides a window into how the agri-food industry wants to be seen, at least as far as the use of migrant labour is concerned. The analysis above indicates that there is much anxiety within the industry around this perception in the post-pandemic era, leading some of the groups that represent employers of migrant farm workers to take initiative through campaigns such as *More than a Migrant Worker* that present a narrative which favours the status quo that has facilitated continuous expansion of the TFWP and SAWP in spite of mounting criticism of these programs.

4.4 Discussion: Industry Discourse and Migration Theory

In Chapter 2, I presented my framework for understanding temporary migration in the Canadian agri-food industry, drawing on two theories: Labour Market Segmentation

Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration. To refresh, these theories complement each other to explain migrant labour as a system. This framework encompasses the inputs of both increased demand for migrant labour from employers in Canada and economic precarity of rural families in sending countries that fuel the expansion of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system. In this section I will discuss how the findings of my critical discourse analysis on the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative interact with this theoretical framework and how a Labour Market Segmentation Theory- and New Economics of Labour Migration-informed understanding of the agri-food migrant labour system can explain some of the themes that emerged.

In Chapter 2 I showed how Labour Market Segmentation Theory explains the organization of the labour market into an unofficial hierarchy, where some jobs and career paths are afforded lower status, lower pay, fewer privileges, poorer working conditions, fewer opportunities for advancement, and less security (Dickens & Lang, 1992; Grimshaw et al., 2017; Seo, 2021). This hierarchy is often rationalized as a reflection of the difficulty or importance of a job, but the inverse is often true, as the rewards of work are more closely connected to the socioeconomic status and educational attainment of the worker (Graeber, 2018). The result is that as high-income economies like that of Canada have developed, types of labour typically considered to be low-skilled, including many jobs in the agri-food sector, have become devalued both in terms of compensation and social prestige, driving workers away from these positions and towards higher-paid, more socially prestigious career paths. Labour market segmentation is reflected in the current and forecasted labour shortages in the agri-food

industry (CAHRC, 2019), thereby driving employers' steadily increasing demand for migrant workers over the past 60 years.

The findings of my critical discourse analysis, when considered within this framework, reveal a dissonance within the discourse. As demonstrated throughout my findings, the industry groups behind the *More than a Migrant Worker* consistently communicate that the jobs done by migrant farm workers are essential to Canadian food systems, highly skilled, and involve long, hard hours of work. Industry representatives describe migrant farm workers as "critically important to our ability as a country to feed Canadians" (Schaer, 2021). Many of the selected texts extol the accumulated experience and skillsets of migrant farm workers who return to Canadian farms annually for decades. This discourse promotes the industry's professed respect for migrant workers and understanding of the immense value of their labour.

This apparent value is at times difficult to reconcile with the conditions that migrant workers experience in Canada and the compensation received for their time and labour, even based on the descriptions in this discourse. The worker profiles on *More than a Migrant Worker's* website are quite candid about the difficulty of spending months away from home, separated from family, which research has shown can have severe repercussions for migrant farm workers' mental health and familial relationships (McLaughlin et al., 2018). The stories *More than a Migrant Worker* promotes about migrant worker housing highlight new and relatively comfortable structures and mostly downplay the substandard housing that academic research and journalistic investigations have reported. However, even the living arrangements that *More than a*

Migrant Worker highlights as positive examples can hardly be seen as enviable. These are still, for the most part, bunkhouses that usually require migrant farm workers to share living space, kitchen and bathroom facilities, and bedrooms with each other, offering little in the way of privacy.

There is also the matter of migrant farm workers' pay, which is again difficult to reconcile with their skill and importance as described in *More than a Migrant Worker*. Several of the selected texts make a point of how migrant farm workers are paid at least the provincial minimum wage, apparently in response to a misconception readers might hold that migrant workers earn less than minimum wage. These statements, while accurate, do not reflect any consideration of whether minimum wage is appropriate compensation for labour that, by the industry's own description, is indispensable to farm operations' financial viability and the security of Canada's food systems. There is, of course, the possibility that employers might choose to pay workers above minimum wage, but there is little indication in the discourse that employers take the value or skill of migrant workers into account when determining wages. The relatively low pay and high difficulty of the jobs performed by migrant farm workers is also consistent with a Labour Market Segmentation Theory-informed understanding of the Canadian labour market. As explained in Chapter 2, the segmented labour market reinforces expectations that these positions will be low-paid relative to other careers that have higher prestige and feature barriers to entry that filter out prospective workers based on socioeconomic status, such as expensive and time-consuming credentials.

Labour Market Segmentation Theory can also explain the apparent labour shortages that the discourse often insists necessitate the continued expansion of migrant labour programs. The selected texts repeatedly state that local workers simply do not apply for these jobs in sufficient numbers. One employer profiled for *More than a Migrant Worker* claims, “I have had a help wanted ad locally for 12 months of the year, and I’ve only had two responses in the last five years. The type of work we need to be done is repetitive and people aren’t interested in doing this anymore” (OFVGA, 2024j). The discourse appears to assert that there is simply no alternative to hiring migrant farm workers, as domestic workers do not want these positions. According to Labour Market Segmentation Theory, there may be some truth to that, as workers are informed by perceptions of a job’s social status, disincentivizing them from accepting uncredentialed, manual labour jobs in high-income, highly educated labour markets. Enticing more Canadian citizens and permanent residents to engage in farm work may therefore require wide-scale restructuring of the segmented labour market such that these jobs would be considered deserving of a living wage and attractive as a career path for more domestic workers.

Employer demand is not enough alone to fuel the consistent expansion of Canada’s agricultural migrant labour system over decades, however. To sustain this growth, there must be an international labour pool elsewhere willing to accept the employment terms that Canadian workers have apparently shunned. This is where the New Economics of Labour Migration enters my framework, explaining that families in source countries make decisions at the household level to send a member to work abroad in exchange for the financial stability and investment potential provided by this

foreign income stream through remittances (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1999). These decisions, as I explained in Chapter 2, are made within the context of economic constraints in migrant workers' home countries in the Global South resulting from rural and agricultural destabilization in the wake of international neoliberal reforms spread by some of the same countries which are now recipients of this labour source. This destabilization has left limited financial opportunities for rural families to maintain or improve their standards of living, prompting many to seek opportunities for foreign income through remittances from either permanent or temporary migration of one or more family members.

The connection between migrant farm workers' motivations for working in Canada and their families' financial circumstances is illustrated quite explicitly throughout *More than a Migrant Worker*. As detailed in my findings above, the workers profiled for *More than a Migrant Worker* frequently discuss wanting to provide a higher standard of living for their families. In some cases, the choice to pursue employment in Canada is framed as a decision made with their families or spouses. The discourse points to tangible impacts of migrant workers' remittances, most notably the enrolment of their children in post-secondary studies. This discourse is consistent with the principles of the New Economics of Labour Migration described above.

The difference in earnings potential between Canada and sending countries that motivates migrants and their families to make this decision also plays a role in how the discourse rationalizes the dissonance between the importance and difficulty of migrant workers' labour and the relatively low compensation they receive. While the wages

migrant workers receive may not be competitive or attractive for Canadian workers, who bear the high cost of living in Canada, migrant workers are able to save and remit considerably more income than they would typically be able to earn in their home communities (Carvajal & Johnson, 2016), something that the discourse frequently mentions. As presented in my findings above, many of the migrant workers profiled in *More than a Migrant Worker* describe a lack of employment opportunities in their home communities as a key motivating factor in the decision to work in Canada.

By highlighting some of the more positive impacts of migrant workers' remittances, the discourse sidesteps critiques that Canada's migrant labour programs enable the exploitation of migrant farm workers, whose families, according to New Economics of Labour Migration theory, have centered their financial planning around a revenue stream that is tied to a single employer. The consistent messaging in the discourse that migrant workers are motivated by a desire to help their families and have few other opportunities to do so is presented as evidence of the good that results from these programs, but ironically also underscores that migrant farm workers can be motivated to accept conditions that would be considered unacceptable to a domestic worker.

Overall, the discourse reinforces the viability of a New Economics of Labour Migration- and Labour Market Segmentation Theory-based framework for understanding Canada's migrant labour system. This framework is reflected in how the discourse presents the jobs filled by migrant workers and why the industry increasingly turns to these programs to fill labour shortages, as well as in the presentation of migrant farm workers' motivation for working in Canada. However, the discourse presents an

incomplete and selective narrative of this system. It shows the value, difficulty, and skill requirements of these jobs, but does not reflect on the low pay, health hazards, and perceived low social status that may be driving Canadian workers away from them. It portrays the critical role that remittances play in the finances of migrant workers and their families but leaves out the vulnerability to abuse that this creates.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The State of Agricultural Migrant Labour Discourse

The years following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have seen a surge in public awareness, media coverage, research, and multi-stakeholder discourse on Canada's agricultural migrant labour programs and the condition of migrant workers in the agri-food industry. Some groups representing agri-food employers have responded to this increased attention by leaning into public conversation about migrant farmworkers' role in Canadian food systems, the industry's treatment of this workforce, and the policy framework of the TFWP. Nowhere is this approach more apparent than in the discourse created for the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative. The vast quantity of public messaging generated by these industry groups has yielded an unprecedented opportunity to understand the agri-food industry's response to the many critical discourses about these programs coming out of academic research, news media, and advocacy groups. Through critical discourse analysis of the selected texts, I have generated findings about the industry's narrative and approach to influencing public opinion about migrant farm workers, the ways in which *More than a Migrant Worker* interacts with other discourses about this topic, and some of the apparent concerns that may be causing the industry to attempt to influence public opinion in this way.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I raised two central research questions. To refresh, these were:

1. How does the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative portray Canada's agricultural migrant labour system to the public?

2. How does this portrayal respond to critiques of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system identified in the academic literature?

In answer to these questions, my findings indicate that *More than a Migrant Worker* responds to critiques coming from academic, media, and advocacy discourses which argue, to varying degrees, that Canada's agricultural migrant labour programs make migrant farm workers vulnerable to systemic exploitation and exacerbate negative impacts on worker health and well-being. I found the response in the selected discourse was generally defensive, pushing back on alleged misinformation from unnamed sources and pursuing an overwhelmingly positive narrative about migrant labour that emphasized the upward financial mobility of workers and their families, the importance of migrant labour to Canadian food systems, and feel-good stories about friendships, community events, and new housing builds. In doing so, *More than a Migrant Worker* appears to portray Canada's agricultural Migrant Labour System as an almost universally positive force in both Canadian food systems and the lives of migrant workers. I found no clear acknowledgement of systemic flaws that contribute to migrant workers' vulnerability, exploitation, and poor health outcomes. This portrayal stands in contrast to established academic consensus described in Chapter 2, which is that the TFWP and its various streams serving the agri-food industry place migrant workers in an unequal power relationship with their employer that makes them highly vulnerable to forms of exploitation and negative health outcomes.

While the discourse is clearly not intended (nor claims) to be a representative sample of the migrant worker experience, it is generally dismissive of the substantial

evidence from academic research and journalistic reporting that abuse, safety issues, substandard housing, and negative mental and physical health outcomes are all persistent, systemic problems in the agricultural migrant labour system. Such concerns are mostly disregarded as a rarity or redirected against irregular, undocumented forms of migrant labour that the discourse condemns.

Industry groups attempting to influence public opinion through public relations campaigns is not new, but I would argue that in this case it has particularly important implications. Migrant labour's role in Canada's food systems and the rights and condition of migrant farm workers have likely never received more public attention than they have in the years since March 2020 when the first pandemic border restrictions were put in place. While most of the pandemic-caused immigration and public health policies have since been removed, the question of how to ensure migrant workers receive fair treatment and healthy, safe working and living conditions is still evolving, as governments continue to tweak housing standards and temporary migration remains a contentious media issue. It is crucial that various stakeholders, including migrant workers' groups, service providers, different levels of government, academic researchers, and of course, agri-food employers and industry groups remain open to dialogue that is clear about the causes of remaining systemic problems and injustices within the migrant labour system. The findings of this critical discourse analysis may indicate a hardening of the industry's position on these issues. This would suggest that these groups may be less willing to support policy changes that would address the systemic problems identified above, as at least some influential groups within the

industry do not seem to acknowledge that these problems are systemic in the first place.

Despite policy changes in the past few years, recent academic literature on the TFWP and SAWP provides little indication that the systemic problems faced by migrant farm workers in the Canadian agri-food industry have been adequately addressed. To do so would require changes to the migration system that would renegotiate the power relationship between migrant farm workers and their employers, such as the provision of more permissive work permits for migrants to change employers at will, easier pathways to permanent residency and family reunification, and job protections to prevent dismissal as retribution against workers for asserting their rights. If the agri-food industry values migrant workers as much as the discourse often claims, it needs to approach the ongoing public dialogue on this topic with acknowledgement of the existence of systemic problems and openness to the possibility of systemic change.

5.2 Contributions to the Literature

This research provides important contributions to the literature on migrant farm workers in Canada and the application of migration theories and critical discourse analysis methods to this topic. It appears to be the first application of critical discourse analysis to agri-food industry discourse on migrant workers, providing previously unavailable insight into the industry's response to evolving media coverage, critique, and public awareness of the treatment of migrant farm workers in the post-pandemic era. This insight has implications for future research on this topic. The defensive posturing of the discourse and the unusually active role these industry groups are taking

to shape public opinion through the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative show that their openness to policy change and receptiveness to criticism may have declined over the past five years. These organizations representing employers of migrant farm workers do not appear to be willing to discuss the existence of systemic problems inherent to the policy structure of these programs that lead to the serious problems indicated in the literature. This is likely not a surprise to many researchers that have studied or even worked directly with the agri-food industry on this topic, but nonetheless, it is important confirmation and may inform how researchers choose to present their work if it is intended for readers within the industry or policy makers who view them as important stakeholders.

In addition to providing insight into the agri-food industry, the results of this critical discourse analysis can inform the further development of migration theory to be applied to questions about migrant farm workers in Canada and similar managed migration systems. The findings of this critical discourse analysis align with a New Economics of Labour Migration- and Labour Market Segmentation Theory-informed framework for understanding such managed migration programs. My findings indicate that agri-food industry groups have largely accepted the existence of a segmented labour market in Canada that drives prospective local workers away from the employment opportunities the industry offers. The discourse's claims that Canadian workers simply will not meet their demand for labour, as well as their advocacy for continued support for the TFWP, indicate that the industry foresees a continued reliance on migrant labour in the coming years, despite what I caution are the inherent risks of doing so as demonstrated by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. *More*

than a Migrant Worker's insistence that Canadian workers' disinterest in agri-food jobs forces employers to recruit ever-larger numbers of migrant workers indicates that the growth of Canada's agricultural migrant labour system stems in large part from labour market segmentation.

Simultaneously, the discourse's narrative highlighting the positive financial impacts of remittances on migrant farm workers' families provides further support for the New Economics of Labour Migration as a theory to explain the seemingly inexhaustible pool of prospective workers interested in meeting the Canadian agri-food industry's growing demand. The many workers profiled for *More than a Migrant Worker* detail personal motivations and stories that closely mirror the New Economics of Labour Migration's explanation that household financial planning within limited opportunities to raise excess capital in their home communities is the primary motivating factor for families to send a member abroad as a migrant worker.

The framework I outlined in my literature review combines elements of the New Economics of Labour Migration and Labour Market Segmentation Theory to explain how they complement each other when applied to Canada's agricultural migrant labour system. This framework explains how international inequality, particularly in rural communities that have been severely disrupted by neoliberal market reforms in recent decades, is an essential component of this system, providing reserve labour that can be controlled through migration policies to fuel the agri-food industry's ever-growing needs in an increasingly segmented labour market. The field of migration studies is still evolving, and most theories have limited application to only the supply of or demand for

migrant labour. My application of Labour Market Segmentation Theory and the New Economics of Labour Migration together shows that this approach can yield results for understanding agricultural migrant labour programs as a holistic system.

5.3 Directions for Future Study

Throughout my analysis and the writing of this paper, I have come across areas where further research is needed to better understand and discuss some of the problems in Canada's agricultural migrant labour system. I have assembled some of these questions here so that they may lead to further research that can continue to advance our knowledge of these critical issues.

A common theme that I identified across *More than a Migrant Worker* was that it frequently minimized instances of worker mistreatment as a minority of cases in comparison to the many employers who do not mistreat migrant workers. As explained above, this is not necessarily inconsistent with the findings of academic research that point to systemic failures of migrant labour policy that allow cases of abuse to occur. However, it is difficult to find quantitative information about how prevalent such abuses are, making comparisons with other industries that are not as dependent on migrant labour programs difficult. The lack of clarity about the quantitative impact of the SAWP and TFWP on the frequency and severity of worker mistreatment is an obstacle to communicating the need for policy change, as qualitative data – which the field tends to favour – may not appear as conclusive to industry groups or policy makers. Large-sample quantitative studies of these matters present obvious challenges given that migrant farm workers are spread across the country and often have limited internet

access or are otherwise difficult to reach. Nonetheless, further quantitative study in this area is recommended to achieve greater clarity around the impact of systemic power imbalances on migrant worker mistreatment.

Another area where knowledge is currently lacking is around the effectiveness of current federal, provincial, and local oversight mechanisms. The discourse cites high compliance rates with federal inspections to deflect critiques regarding systemic problems, while critics have argued that current oversight mechanisms lack teeth and depend on workers' complaints which are disincentivized by the risk of reprisal by their employers. More research into these oversight processes would help to clarify in what ways they fail to address worker complaints, how frequent employers' reprisals against complainants are, and the appropriateness of current approaches to address non-compliant workplaces.

Further research could improve our understanding about the applicability of Labour Market Segmentation Theory as a theoretical approach for understanding demand for migrant labour in the agri-food sector. Critical discourse analysis indicated that the agri-food industry advocates for employers' access to migrant labour programs in large part due to apparent labour shortages, frequently referencing the difficulty employers face in hiring locally. The TFWP requires that employers demonstrate that local workers cannot meet their needs through a labour market impact assessment that demonstrates they have posted the position publicly and failed to find a qualified local candidate. However, there is limited research on employers' actual recruitment practices and the steps they take to try to attract local workers. Future research could

investigate the extent to which Canadian workers are aware of agri-food opportunities in their communities and their reasons for pursuing or not pursuing them, which would provide further insight into the industry's claims that Canadians are not interested in these jobs and the applicability of Labour Market Segmentation Theory to the agricultural migrant labour system.

Finally, while this analysis pertains to discourse on migrant labour in Canada, there are now similar programs in many countries, some of which look directly to Canada as an example of best practices in managed migration, as explained in the literature review. The existence of similar policy frameworks in different international jurisdictions presents the opportunity for cross-case comparisons of industry discourse. In the post-pandemic era, are industry groups in other countries feeling similar pressures to those motivating Canadian agri-food groups to take such an active role in conversations about the treatment and rights of migrant workers? How are such groups responding to critiques about power imbalances between migrant workers and employers? It would be valuable to know if organized efforts like the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative had been started in other jurisdictions and if industry discourse there replicated the same patterns that emerge from my analysis.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in this paper, I have prepared recommendations for policy makers, the agri-food industry, and migrants' rights advocacy groups. These recommendations prioritize work towards the elimination of systemic failures to protect

agricultural migrant workers in Canada given the inter-discursive tensions revealed through my analysis.

5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy Makers

Academic research on the conditions experienced by migrant farmworkers is clear that current measures under Canada's agricultural migration streams are insufficient to adequately protect workers from mistreatment and leave them vulnerable to abuse, illness, and injury, and often with limited access to services or ability to assert their rights. While substantial change is required to address these failures, the findings of my critical discourse analysis show there may be increasing opposition to such change from the agri-food sector. Simultaneously, there are some areas where industry groups have indicated they would welcome change to improve the consistency of standards and expectations for employers. Based on this analysis, I have prepared 4 recommendations for policy makers:

- 1. Improved transparency of oversight processes:** Information about current oversight processes from different levels of government is difficult to find. It is not clear how many inspections/investigations of workplaces with migrant workers are undertaken, how many of these are instigated by a complaint, what processes are followed to ensure complaints are completely and fairly evaluated, or what steps are taken to ensure that workers can comfortably and safely report mistreatment and be protected from reprisals. The discourse cites the existence of reporting mechanisms, inspections, and consequences for non-compliance as evidence that workers are adequately protected whereas researchers and

advocates have claimed current processes are inadequate for this purpose.

Greater transparency about inspections undertaken at the federal, provincial, and local levels would help to evaluate the current oversight regime and suggest options for improvement.

- 2. Improved communication of evidence-based policies:** The results of this critical discourse analysis indicate that some industry groups and employers do not feel policy changes made during the pandemic – particularly regarding housing and health and safety – have been adequately based in evidence of their effectiveness or necessity. This perception may impede the development of national migrant worker housing standards and other ongoing work to improve the conditions of migrant farm workers. They may also make implementation of the new standards difficult due to a lack of stakeholder buy-in. Communications about new standards should emphasize evidence-based approaches with input from agri-food industry experts, public health, and consultation with migrant farm workers.
- 3. Reduce inconsistency of local requirements:** The discourse analysis indicates frustration within the industry with the inconsistency of standards for migrant worker housing applied in different provincial and local jurisdictions across the country. Development of the proposed national housing standard may alleviate some of these issues, but employers will still have to work with local and provincial planning and public health bodies during the construction of new migrant worker housing. Federal and provincial governments need to collaborate

to ensure that provincial planning policies and federal housing standards align closely to avoid delays to the construction of new migrant worker housing.

4. Consider policy options to address systemic abuse that are not

complaints-based: The academic literature is clear that complaints-based oversight mechanisms to investigate alleged mistreatment or substandard conditions are insufficient to protect migrant workers, who are disincentivized from complaining due to the vast power differential with their employers and fear of potential reprisal, even if their anonymity is assured. Currently, migrant farm workers who can demonstrate they have been abused or are in danger of abuse can be granted an open work permit to seek employment elsewhere in the agri-food sector. There is no apparent reason why these work permits, which still restrict migrants to working for approved employers, could not be extended to all migrant farm workers by default, thereby giving them more freedom to leave abusive workplaces without having to make a complaint that could risk their ability to work in Canada.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Employers and the Agri-Food Industry

My findings indicate that industry groups and employers are currently insecure and defensive about migrant labour practices in the face of external critiques. This is despite the fact that, by all indications, migrant labour under the TFWP only continues to expand. Simultaneously, through this discourse, industry groups and their members profess that they value and respect the contribution of migrant farm workers to Canada's food systems and recognize that more can always be done to support these workers, though it is unclear what this means in terms of support for potential policy

changes. Taking these industry groups at their word, I have 4 recommendations for their consideration:

- 1. Acknowledge the vulnerability of migrant farm workers:** The critical discourse analysis did not find much indication that agri-food industry groups are willing to recognize the systemic power discrepancy between migrant farm workers and their employers that academic research has shown makes workers highly vulnerable to abuse. This critical understanding of these power structures does not have to be interpreted as an attack on the agri-food industry or employers of migrant farm workers as a group. Rather, the industry could recognize this argument, as I believe most researchers and advocates do, as a critique of a policy structure that enables abuse and mistreatment, even if most employers treat migrant workers with respect and decency. In order to participate in the policy discussions necessary to find actual solutions to ensure migrant workers are protected from exploitation, the industry first needs to approach this problem with a recognition that current policies leave these workers vulnerable.
- 2. Communicate with other stakeholders about what potential policy changes the industry would or would not be open to:** At several points throughout the selected texts, industry groups signaled their support for workers' rights and an interest in ensuring migrant workers are provided with good living and working conditions. However, the discourse is vague about specific policy changes that the industry is willing to work towards to fulfil these goals. Other stakeholders, including governments, researchers, and advocacy groups may interpret this

vagueness as an unwillingness to accept potential policy changes, reducing the possibility of finding areas of common agreement.

3. Embrace the potential of open work permits: As described in the recommendations for policy makers above, current provisions for open work permits that allow workers who the federal government determines have been or are in danger of being abused could be extended by default to all migrant workers who enter Canada through the TFWP agricultural streams. While this may not be a perfect solution to address all cases, it would address many of the criticisms of the current migrant labour system as migrant farm workers would no longer be restricted to a single employer. Additionally, such a policy may even improve efficiency for the agri-food sector, as the workforce would be able to flow more freely between employers and between regions/commodities as demand fluctuates throughout the year. To my knowledge, agri-food industry groups have so far not indicated this is a policy change that they would be open to, but they may wish to consider advocating for such changes to migrant farm worker permits in the interest of improving worker-employer relations and workforce efficiency.

4. Do not underestimate the impact employers can have: *More than a Migrant Worker* highlights several cases where employers have taken actions to improve the experiences of migrant workers they employ, most notably through efforts to ensure worker housing is comfortable and that workers have access to opportunities for cultural expression and engagement with the broader community. While I argue that such efforts by individual employers cannot be

used to dispute the existence of systemic policy issues, my past research has found that actions by considerate employers can have a profoundly positive impact on workers' experience and mitigate the feelings of isolation and helplessness that some workers face (Helps, 2020). The structural problems in the TFWP that make workers vulnerable can only be addressed through policy change, but there are many opportunities for employers to improve circumstances at their own workplace if they take the initiative to look into workers' needs.

5. Prepare for future disruptions to the agricultural migrant labour system:

Critical discourse analysis indicates that the industry views migrant labour through the SAWP and TFWP as a part of the agri-food workforce that will continue to grow for years to come. Agri-food employers and industry groups are investing in not just physical infrastructure (i.e. housing) but also in efforts to influence policy makers and public opinion to support the expansion of these programs and, therefore, the deepening of Canadian food systems' reliance on this labour input. However, as the start of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, international migrant labour is still vulnerable to disruption from emergencies and policy changes that can be financially damaging to the industry, which may become a higher risk as new diseases, climate change, and political instability present possibilities of future disruptions to global travel. Given these risks, the industry may want to renew efforts to develop the domestic Canadian agri-food workforce, which my framework would suggest requires finding ways to

overcome the labour market segmentation that has reduced the domestic pool of prospective agri-food workers.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Advocacy Groups

My critical discourse analysis suggests the agri-food industry is becoming increasingly defensive against critiques from groups who advocate for stronger rights and protections for migrant farm workers. Much of the discourse focused on pushing back against the claims of unnamed advocacy groups who the discourse represents as misinformed and unduly influential. Regardless of whether this characterization is true, advocacy groups may want to consider the discourse's potential impacts on public perception of migrant's rights advocacy when strategizing about potential activities, communications, and policy goals. With these considerations I have prepared 3 recommendations for advocacy groups:

1. Ensure consistency and accuracy in messaging about migrant farm

workers: The discourse I analyzed casts doubt on the credibility of activists in general (though rarely specific activists or groups) by identifying supposed misconceptions or misinformation they allegedly spread. This may have an effect of reducing public trust in advocates' work to identify systemic problems and workers' rights abuses in the agri-food sector. In this environment, it is crucial that communications about migrant workers' rights and conditions be accurate and avoid hyperbole or sweeping generalizations that could provide opportunities to undermine legitimate critiques.

- 2. Center the voices of migrant farm workers:** In connection with the first point, the discourse at times seems to imply that activists have spoken over the voices of migrant farm workers and are not informed by what workers want or need. Again, I do not see this as an accurate characterization of most migrant workers' rights advocacy groups, who often include migrant workers among their members or work directly with migrant workers to understand the issues they face. However, it signals the importance of providing opportunities for migrant workers to voice their needs directly to the public as much as possible, though this is often difficult as they may risk consequences in doing so.
- 3. Seek improved transparency in government oversight:** As mentioned above in my recommendations to policy makers, there is little transparency in how current oversight mechanisms to protect migrant workers against potential abuses of their rights work. This is an area where I believe more advocacy would be useful to push governments to release more data about inspections of workplaces employing migrant workers, as it would help advocates and researchers to identify ways in which current oversight mechanisms may be failing to prevent migrants' rights abuses.

5.5 Final Reflections

I have been engaged in research on migrant farm workers in the Canadian agri-food sector for roughly six years now, since I first started working on my MSc thesis in 2019. In the years since, it has been fascinating to watch interest in this topic grow, as the pandemic brought attention to the dependence of the food Canadians eat on foreign

workers who needed to clear suddenly restricted borders, who were particularly vulnerable to the spread of disease in tightly packed housing, and who already struggled with social isolation and loneliness long before Canadians started social distancing. This environment brought on a rapid increase in media attention, academic research, and public awareness, turning what had previously felt like a little-known issue into a suddenly mainstream topic that many people seem to have opinions on. Evidently, the agri-food industry has noticed this increase in discourse just as I did.

For all this attention, though, I still find it somewhat perplexing that agri-food industry groups are concerned enough about public perception to try to sway it through an effort such as *More than a Migrant Worker*. From my perspective, there does not appear to be a credible threat to the continued use and expansion of the TFWP. There is no realistic prospect, in my opinion, that any government in the foreseeable future would attempt to curb migrant labour practices in the agri-food sector, even as critiques mount. The discourse I discovered through the *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative and other industry texts appears to say as much about the anxieties of agri-food employers about what their neighbours think of them as it does about the sector's concerns about potentially looming policy changes. I suspect that industry groups and their members have, to a certain extent, internalized systemic policy critiques as attacks on their own character as individuals and as an industry, and the defensive tone of the discourse represents a sort of deflection from this perceived attack.

While I have spent much of this paper critically analyzing the rhetorical techniques used in the discourse that seem to dismiss legitimate concerns about

migrant labour policies, that is not to say that I do not also see much of value in these texts. The *More than a Migrant Worker* initiative is meant to share the stories of migrant farm workers that most Canadians rarely hear (OFVGA, 2024a), and at times it does so quite effectively. There are dozens of touching examples from the worker profiles on the *More than a Migrant Worker* website where workers talk about the successes of their children, the camaraderie they feel with fellow workers, or the enjoyment and satisfaction they find in the work they do. There are also examples of employers making genuinely positive efforts to improve the working and living conditions of migrant workers and expressing respect and appreciation for their labour. These stories are just as much a part of the migrant worker experience as the accounts of mistreatment that have captured so much attention. However, my critical discourse analysis has focused on the elements of that experience that *More than a Migrant Worker* appears eager to downplay or deflect. The reality of agricultural migrant labour in Canada, based on what I have learned from the past six years of research, is neither as optimistic as the picture painted by the agri-food industry, nor as bleak as that of its harshest critics.

What I found in this discourse reminded me of some of the more challenging conversations I have had with agri-food employers. At guest lectures and conference presentations, I have been asked pointed questions about what kind of narrative I was attempting to promote about farmers, despite having done my best to criticize policies, rather than individuals. At these same presentations, though, other employers have asked me questions about the needs of migrant workers and what they can do to better meet them. Within the agri-food industry, I see both defensiveness against outside criticism and openness to identify and address systemic problems. I hope that the tone

struck by much of the discourse here does not signal a retreat away from the latter and into the former. The agri-food industry can and should participate in the policy discussions necessary to address the flaws in Canada's migrant labour system that still leave workers vulnerable to injustice. As with any systemic problem, acknowledgement of its existence is the first step towards fixing it.

Bibliography

- Abreu, A. (2012). The new economics of labor migration: Beware of neoclassicals bearing gifts. *Forum for Social Economics* 41(1), 46-67. DOI: 10.1007/s12143-010-9077-2
- Aguilar, L., Tomic, P., & Trumper, R. (2011). Mexican migrant agricultural workers and accommodations in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia. *Metropolis British Columbia Working Paper Series*, 11(4), 1-33. Retrieved from https://books-scholarsportal-info.us1.proxy.openathens.net/uri/ebooks/ebooks0/gibson_cppc/2011-08-22/1/10478655
- Alcaraz, N., Ferrer, I., Abes, J., & Lorenzetti, L. (2023). Hiding for Survival: Highlighting the lived experiences of precarity and labour abuse among Filipino non-status migrants in Canada. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, 6, 256-267. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-021-00169-x>
- Barkin, D. (2002). The reconstruction of a modern day Mexican peasantry. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 30(1), 73-90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150412331333242>
- Barnetson, B., Caxaj, S., Cohen, A., Cole, D., Colindres, C., Drolet, N., Foster, J., Hanley, J., Hennebry, J., Huesca, E., Mayell, S., McLaughlin, J., Tew, M., & Vosko, L. (2020). *Recommendations for overcoming health challenges faced by migrant agricultural workers during the COVID-19-Virus pandemic*. Retrieved from Migrant Worker Health Project: <https://www.migrantworker.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/HC-recommendations-June-1-2020.pdf>

Basok, T. (2002). *Tortillas and tomatoes: Transmigrant Mexican harvesters in Canada*.
Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Basok, T. & Bélanger, D. (2016). Migration management, disciplinary power, and performances of subjectivity: Agricultural migrant workers in Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 41(2), 139-163.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/canajsocicahican.41.2.139>

Basok, T. & George, G. (2020). 'We are part of this place, but I do not think I belong.' Temporariness, social inclusion and belonging among migrant farmworkers in Southwestern Ontario. *International Migration* 59, 99-112. DOI: 10.1111/imig.12804

Basok, T., Tucker, E., Vosko, L., Caxaj, S., Hennebry, J., Mayell, S., McLaughlin, J., & Weiler, A. (2022). The 'contract' and its discontents: Can it address protection gaps for migrant agricultural workers in Canada? *International Migration* 63(1), 1-14.
DOI: 10.1111/imig.13364

Bauder, H. (2006). *Labor movement: How migration regulates labor markets*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bauder, H. (2017). *Migration Borders Freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Bedford, R., Bedford, C., Wall, J., & Young, M. (2017). Managed temporary labour migration of Pacific Islanders to Australia and New Zealand in the early twenty-first century. *Australian Geographer*, 37-35.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2016.1266629>

- Beck, E., Horan, P., & Tolbert, C. (1978). Stratification in a dual economy: A sectoral model of earnings determination. *American Sociological Review* 43, 704-720.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2094545>
- Beckford, C. (2016). The experiences of Caribbean migrant farmworkers in Ontario, Canada. *Social and Economic Studies* 65(1), 153-188.
- Benaquisto, L. (2012) Codes and coding. In L.M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, 86-88. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Beingessner, N. & Fletcher, A. (2019). 'Going local': farmers' perspectives on local food systems in rural Canada. *Agriculture and Human Values* 37, 129-145. Doi: 10.1007/s10460-019-09975-6
- A better life is why we come to Canada, say migrant farm workers. (2023, August 16). *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/sponsored-sections/a-better-life-is-why-we-come-to-canada-say-migrant-farm-workers/article_507db3d6-3163-5821-a73b-8cbb99387646.html
- Binford, A. (2013). *Tomorrow we're all going to the harvest: Temporary Foreign Worker programs and neoliberal political economy*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Binford, A. L. (2019). Assessing temporary foreign worker programs through the prism of Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program: Can they be reformed or should they be eliminated? *Dialectical Anthropology*, 43(4), 347-366. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10624-019-09553-6>

- Brennan, H., & Durmaz, M. (2025). Global conflict zones grow by two thirds since 2021, topping 6 million km². *Veridisk Maplecroft Political Risk Outlook*. Retrieved June 24, 2025 from https://uploads.guim.co.uk/2024/11/20/Global_conflict_zones_grow_by_two_thirds_since_2021,_topping_6_million_km2_-_Report.pdf
- Briones-Vozmediano, E., & González-González, M. (2022). Explotación y precariedad sociolaboral, la realidad de las personas migrantes trabajadores en agricultura en España. *Archivos de Prevención y Riesgos Laborales*, 25(1), 18-24. Retrieved from https://scielo.isciii.es/scielo.php?pid=S1578-25492022000100018&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en
- Budworth, M.H., Rose, A., & Mann, S. (2017). *Report on the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program*. IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/11324/2679>
- Cain, G. (1976). The challenge of segmented labor market theories to orthodox theory: A survey. *Journal of Economic Literature* 14(4), 1215-1257. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2722547>
- Campbell, T. (2024, August 15). Essex County farmers denounce as 'extreme' United Nations 'slavery' report. *Windsor Star*. Retrieved June 21, 2025 from <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/essex-county-farmers-denounce-as-extreme-united-nations-slavery-report>

Canada, Office of the Auditor General of. (2021). *Report: Health and Safety of Agricultural Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

Canada - Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) work permit holders by province/territory of intended destination, program and year in which permit(s) became effective, January 2015 - March 2022. (2024, May 18). Retrieved from Canada, Government of: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/360024f2-17e9-4558-bfc1-3616485d65b9>.

Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council [CAHRC]. (2019). *How labour challenges will shape the future of agriculture: Agriculture forecast to 2029*. Ottawa: CAHRC.

Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council [CAHRC]. (2021). *Understanding the Effects of COVID-19 on Canada's Agriculture Workforce*. Ottawa: CAHRC.

Canadian Grocer Staff. (2023, September 18). Fruit and vegetable growers push back against UN expert comments linking foreign worker programs to 'slavery'. *Canadian Grocer*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://canadiangrocer.com/fruit-and-vegetable-growers-push-back-against-un-expert-comments-linking-foreign-worker-programs>

Canadian economic dashboard and COVID-19. (2022, January 15). *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2020009-eng.htm>

The Canadian Press. (2023, August 1). Poilievre says Canada's immigration system is broken, sidesteps target cut questions. *CTV News*. Retrieved from

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/poilievre-says-canada-s-immigration-system-is-broken-sidesteps-target-cut-questions-1.6502699>

Canadian Union of Public Employees. (2024, October 11). CUPE supports campaigns of migrant justice in Canada. *Canadian Union of Public Employees*. Retrieved June 21, 2025 from <https://cupe.ca/cupe-supports-campaigns-migrant-justice-canada>

Carvajal Gutiérrez, L., & Johnson, T. (2016). The impact of remittances from Canada's seasonal workers programme on Mexican farms. *International Labour Review*, 155(2), 297-314. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.2014.00022.x>

Castell Roldán, E., & Alvarez Anaya, Y. (2022). Migration and dependency: Mexican countryside proletarianization and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 46, 163-182. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10624-022-09661-w>

Castles, S. (2006). Guestworkers in Europe: A resurrection? *International Migration Review*, 40(4), 741-766. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2006.00042.x>

Caxaj, C. S., & Cohen, A. (2019). "I will not leave my body here": Migrant farmworkers' health and safety amidst a climate of coercion. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(15), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152643>

- Caxaj, S. & Cohen, A. (2021). Relentless border walls: Challenges of providing services and supports to migrant agricultural workers in British Columbia. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 53(2), 41-67. DOI: 10.1353/ces.2021.0010
- Caxaj, S., Cohen, A., & Colindres, C. (2022). More of the same? Migrant agricultural workers' health, safety, and legal rights in the COVID-19 context. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 11(3), 139-156. DOI: 10.5304/jafscd.2022.113.020
- Caxaj, S., Cohen, A., & Marsden, S. (2020). Supports for migrant farmworkers: tensions in (in)access and (in)action. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care* 16(4), 557-571. DOI 10.1108/IJMHSC-03-2020-0017
- Caxaj, S., Tran, M., Mayell, S., Tew, M., McLaughlin, J., Rawal, S., Vosko, L. & Cole, D. (2022). Migrant agricultural workers' deaths in Ontario from January 2020 to June 2021: a qualitative descriptive study. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 21(98), 1-17. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12939-022-01692-7>
- Caxaj, S., Weiler, A., & Martyniuk, J. (2024). Housing Conditions and Health Implications for Migrant Agricultural Workers in Canada: A Scoping Review. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 56(1), 16-28.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/084456212312030>
- Cecco, L. (2024, August 13). UN envoy calls Canada's use of migrant workers 'breeding ground for slavery'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved June 21, 2025 from

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/13/canada-foreign-workers-un-report>

Chouliaraki, L., & Fairclough, N. (2022). The critical analysis of discourse. In *Discourse in Late Modernity* (pp. 53–73). Edinburgh University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748610839-006>

Cohen, A. (2019). ‘Slavery hasn’t ended, it has just become modernized’: Border imperialism and the lived realities of migrant farmworkers in British Columbia, Canada.

Cohen, A., & Caxaj, S. (2018). Bodies and borders: Migrant women farmworkers and the struggle for sexual and reproductive justice in British Columbia, Canada.

Alternative Routes, 29. Retrieved from

<https://alternateroutes.ca/index.php/ar/article/view/22448>

Colindres, C., Cohen, A., & Caxaj, C. (2021). Migrant agricultural workers' health, safety and access to protections: A descriptive survey identifying structural gaps and vulnerabilities in the interior of British Columbia, Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(7), 1696.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18073696>

Davidson, K. (2023, January 23). Spacious quarters improve lives of temporary foreign workers. *The Grower*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://thegrower.org/news/spacious-quarters-improve-lives-temporary-foreign-workers>

Denard, C. (2022, August 24). Industry campaign highlights migrant workers' stories.

Ontario Farmer. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/industry-campaign-highlights-migrant-workers-stories/>

Dickens, W. & Lang, K. (1992). *Labor Market Segmentation Theory: Reconsidering the Evidence*. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Dubinski, K. (2020, March 21). *Canada lifts restrictions on foreign workers, including migrant farm labourers*. Retrieved from CBC News:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/canada-lifts-travel-restrictions-for-foreign-workers-1.5505579>

Elbadri, N. (2021). *Developing a risk assessment framework for evaluating and mitigating occupational exposure of migrant farmworkers to enteric pathogens in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program* [Master's thesis, University of Waterloo]. Retrieved from

<https://dspacemainprd01.lib.uwaterloo.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/0697f863-e5b0-4319-b0da-5ae54354e540/content>

Ellerman, A. (2014). Do policy legacies matter? Past and present guest worker recruitment in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(8), 1235-1253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.984667>

Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and text: Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society* 3(2), 193-217. DOI: 10.1177/095792659200300200

Foster, J. (2012). Making temporary permanent: The silent transformation of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. *Just Labour*, 19, 22-46.
<https://doi.org/10.25071/1705-1436.24>

Foster, J. B., & McChesney, R. W. (2018). The global reserve army of labor and the new imperialism. In S. Aronowitz, & M. Roberts, *Class: The Anthology* (pp. 485-503). Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Gabriel, C., & Macdonald, L. (2019). Contesting gender discrimination in the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 51(3), 17-31.
Retrieved from <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/78/article/750067/summary>

Geiger, M. & Pecoud, A. (2013). Migration, development and the 'migration and development nexus'. *Population, Space and Place* 19(4), 369-374. DOI: 10.1002/psp.1778

George, G. & Borrelli, E. (2023). The differential inclusion of migrant farmworkers and the landscape of support in a migrant-intensive region in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*. 529-552. DOI: 10.1007/s12134-023-01076-y

- George, G., Lozanski, K., Mayell, S., & Caxaj, S. (2024). Migrant agricultural workers' experiences of support in three migrant-intensive communities in Canada. *Social Inclusion* 12(7785), 1-16.
- Glynn, T. & Rao, A. (2024, August 30). UN Special Rapporteur report should be a wake-up call for Canada to protect migrant worker rights. *NB Media Co-op*. Retrieved June 21, 2025 from <https://nbmediacoop.org/2024/08/30/un-special-rapporteur-report-should-be-a-wake-up-call-for-canada-to-protect-migrant-worker-rights/>
- Graeber, D. (2018). *Bullshit Jobs*. New York: Simon and Shuster.
- Graham, J. & Shakow, D. (1990). Labor market segmentation and job-related risk: Differences in risk and compensation between primary and secondary labor markets. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 49(3), 307-323.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3487010>
- Grez, E. E. (2022). Mexican migrant farmworkers in Canada: Death, disposability, and disruptions during COVID-19. *Mexican Studies*, 38(1), 140-169.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/msem.2022.38.1.140>
- Grimshaw, D., Fagan, C., Hebson, G., & Tavora, I. (2017). A new labour market segmentation approach for analyzing inequalities: Introduction and overview. In D. Grimshaw, C. Fagan, G. Hebson, & I. Tavora (Eds.), *Making Work More Equal: A New Labour Market Segmentation Approach* (pp. 1-32). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Gutierrez, E., & Rubli, A. (2023). Challenges for measuring the LGBT+ population and homophobia in Mexico. *IDB Working Paper Series, No. IDB-WP-1444*. Retrieved from <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/289958>
- Haley, E., Caxaj, S., George, G., Hennebry, J., Martell, E., & McLaughlin, J. (2020). Migrant farmworkers face heightened vulnerabilities during COVID-19. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9(3), 35-39. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2020.093.016>
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Helps, L., Silvius, R., & Gibson, R. (2022). Vulnerable, inequitable, and precarious: Impacts of COVID-19 on newcomers, immigrants, and migrant workers in Rural Canada. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 16(4), 159-177. Retrieved from <https://journals.brandonu.ca/jrcd/article/view/2102>
- Helps, W.L. (2020). *The Role of Housing in the Integration and Wellbeing of Foreign Labour in the Canadian Agri-Food Sector: Experiences of Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Canada* [MSc Thesis, University of Guelph]. Retrieved from <https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/b4c0c289-b5cc-4509-9990-b0dc9bbdd950/content>
- Hennebry, J., McLaughlin, J., & Preibisch, K. (2016). Out of the loop: (In)access to health care for migrant workers in Canada. *International Migration and Integration* 17, 521-538. DOI: 10.1007/s12134-015-0417-1

Hennebry, J., & Preibisch, K. (2012). A model for managed migration? Re-examining best practices in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. *International Migration*, 50, 19-40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00598.x>

Henriquez, N., & Ahmad, N. (2021). "The message is you don't exist": exploring lived experiences of rural lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) people utilizing health care services. *SAGE Open Nursing*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2377960821105>

Hjalmarson, E. (2021). Sentenced for the season: Jamaican migrant farmworkers on Okanagan orchards. *Race & Class* 63(4), 81-100. DOI: 10.1177/03063968211054856

Hjalmarson, E., Bunn, R., Cohen, A., Terbasket, E., & Gahman, L. (2015). Race, food, and borders: Situating migrant struggle in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 5(4), 77-82. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2015.054.007>

Hoffelmeyer, M. (2021). "Out" on the farm: queer farmers maneuvering heterosexism and visibility. *Rural Sociology*, 86, 752-776. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ruso.12378>

Horgan, M. & Liinamaa, S. (2017). The social quarantining of migrant labour: Everyday effects of temporary foreign worker regulation in Canada. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(5), 713-730. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1202752>

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC]. (2023, November 1). *Stabilizing Canada's immigration targets to support sustainable growth*. Retrieved from Canada.ca: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2023/11/stabilizing-canadas-immigration-targets-to-support-sustainable-growth.html>

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC]. (2024, January). *IRCC, Deputy Minister, Transition Binder, 2024 - Public Opinion Research on Canadians' Attitudes Towards Immigration*. Retrieved from Government of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/transition-binders/deputy-minister-2024/public-opinion-research.html>

Islam, F. (2024). Global impact of climate change: Glacial melt, sea level rise, water salination and emergent pathogen risks. *Asian Journal of Environment & Ecology* 24(5), 91-113. DOI: 10.9734/ajee/2025/v24i5697

James, T. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic and structural barriers for migrant agricultural workers in Ontario. *The University of Western Ontario Journal of Legal Studies* 12(1).
<https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/wesjalals12&div=2&id=&page=>

Jubany, O., & Lázaro Castellanos, R. (2021). The gender and racial construction of the working class: Temporary mobility of Mexican women workers to the US and

- Canada. *Gender Issues*, 38(1), 47-64. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12147-020-09258-z>
- Karpestam, P., & Andersson, F. (2013). Economic perspectives on migration. In S. Gold, & S. Nawyn, *Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies* (pp. 12-28). New York: Routledge.
- Kelley, M., Wirsig, K., & Smart, V. (2020, November 29). *Bitter Harvest*. Retrieved from CBC News: <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/bitter-harvest-migrant-workers-pandemic/>
- KhosraviNik, M. (2010). The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers: A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Language and Politics* 9(1), 1-28. DOI: 10.1075/JLP.9.1.01KHO
- Landolt, P. & Goldring, L. (2013). The social production of non-citizenship: The consequences of intersecting trajectories of precarious legal status and precarious work. In L. Goldring & P. Landolt (Eds.), *Producing and Negotiating Non-Citizenship: Precarious Legal Status in Canada* (pp. 154-175). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Landry, V., Semsar-Kazerooni, K., Tjong, J., Alj, A., Darnley, A., Lipp, R., & Guberman, G. (2021). The systematized exploitation of temporary migrant agricultural workers in Canada: Exacerbation of health vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and recommendations for the future. *Journal of Migration and Health*, 3, 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2021.100035>

- Lewis, W. A. (1954). Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour. *The Manchester School*, 22(2), 139-191. Retrieved from <https://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/368/368lewistable.pdf>
- Locke, T. (2004). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Lozanski, K. & Baumgartner, K. (2022). Local gastronomy, transnational labour: Farm-to-table tourism and migrant agricultural workers in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada. *Tourism Geographies* 24(1), 73-95. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1765014
- Martínez, J. (2007). *Globalization and its impact on migration in agricultural communities in Mexico*. San Diego: University of California, San Diego.
- Massey, D., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431-466. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938462>
- May, B. (2016). Temporary Foreign Worker Program: Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. *Ourcommons.ca*. Retrieved June 21, 2025 from <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/HUMA/Reports/RP8374415/humarp04/humarp04-e.pdf>
- Mayell, S. (2024). 'It's like we're still in slavery': Stress as distress and discourse among Jamaican farm workers in Ontario, Canada. *Social Sciences* 13(16), 1-20. DOI: 10.3390/socsci13010016

- McDonald, B. (2024, January 24). *Poillievre calls on Trudeau to reimpose visa requirements on Mexico as asylum claims soar*. Retrieved from CBC News: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/poillievre-trudeau-mexico-visa-requirements-asylum-claims-1.7093248>
- McDowell, L. (2008). Old and new European economic migrants: Whiteness and managed migration policies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(1), 19-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802488988>
- McLaughlin, J. & Hennebry, J. (2013). Pathways to precarity: Structural vulnerabilities and lived consequences for migrant farmworkers in Canada. In L. Goldring & P. Landolt (Eds.), *Producing and Negotiating Non-Citizenship: Precarious Legal Status in Canada* (pp. 175-195). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- McLaughlin, J., Hennebry, J., & Haines, T. (2014). Paper versus practice: Occupational health and safety protections and realities for temporary foreign agricultural workers in Ontario. *Perspectives Interdisciplinaires sur le travail et la santé* 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.4000/pistes.3844>
- McLaughlin, J., & Tew, M. (2018). Migrant farm worker health care: Unique strategies for a unique population. In A. Arya, & T. Piggott, *Under-served: Health determinants of Indigenous, inner-city, and migrant populations in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars.
- McLaughlin, J., Wells, D., Díaz Mendiburo, A., Lyn, A., & Vasilevska, B. (2018). 'Temporary Workers', Temporary Fathers: Transnational Family Impacts of

Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. *Industrial Relations*, 72(4), 682-709. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1043172ar>

Menz, G. (2008). *The Political Economy of Managed Migration: Nonstate Actors, Europeanization, and the Politics of Designing Migration Policies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Migrant farm workers proud of work in Canada. (2023, July 5). *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/sponsored_sections/2023/07/01/migrant-farm-workers-proud-of-work-in-canada.html

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change. (2024, August 12). Media release: UN report says permanent resident status for migrants is solution to exploitation. *Migrant Workers Alliance for Changes*. Retrieved June 21, 2025 from <https://migrantworkersalliance.org/press/un-report2024/>

Miller, C. (2018). *Testing the Boundaries of Employer-Driven Agricultural Migration: Privatization and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, 2002-2011* [PhD Thesis, Carleton University]. Carleton University Institutional Repository.

Mitchell, C., Giritli-Nygren, K., & Molestane, R. (2024). *Where Am I in the Picture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mola-Schmidt, A. (2023). *"These are the citizens of our country. We are their servants." A case study of Pierre Poilievre as an example of growing Canadian populism within the framework of Cas Mudde's scholarship*. Prague: Charles University.

Morgan, K. (2004). Evaluating guest worker programs in the U.S.: A comparison of the Bracero Program and President Bush's proposed immigration reform plan. *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal*, 15, 125-144. Retrieved from <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/berklarlj15&div=21&id=&page=>

Moyce, S., & Schenker, M. (2018). Migrant workers and their occupational health and safety. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 39, 351-365. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040617-013714>

Murray, N. (2024, August 14). UN report on Canada's temporary foreign workers details the many ways they've been abused. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/un-report-abuse-temporary-foreign-workers-canada-1.7293495>

Mussell, A. (2015, April). *The Economic Impact of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program in the Ontario Horticulture Sector*. CAHRC. Retrieved from <https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/sites/default/files/2021-11/2015-04-EconomicImpactSAWPHorticulture-Apr-15.pdf>

Nakache, D. (2013). The Canadian Temporary Foreign Worker Program: Regulations, practices, and protection gaps. In L. Goldring & P. Landolt (Eds.), *Producing and Negotiating Non-Citizenship: Precarious Legal Status in Canada* (pp. 71-98). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Nakache, D. (2018). Migrant workers and the right to family accompaniment: A case for family rights in international law and in Canada. *International Migration* 56(6), 221-235. DOI: 10.1111/imig.12444
- Obokata, T. (2023). *End of Mission Statement*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- Obakata, T. (2024). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, on his visit to Canada*. New York: United Nations General Assembly.
- OECD. (2007). *OECD Rural Policy Reviews: Mexico*. Paris: OECD.
- Ollus, N. (2016). *From forced flexibility to forced labour: The exploitation of migrant workers in Finland [PhD dissertation, University of Turku]*. Helsinki: University of Turku. Retrieved from <https://tobias-lib.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/handle/10900/82973>
- Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers [OGVG]. (2020, October 3). Misconceptions about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). *Ogvg.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.ogvg.com/foreign-worker-program>
- Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2021, June 14). Fruit and vegetable farmers push back on reports of poor worker housing. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/fruit-and-vegetable-farmers-push-back-on-reports-of-poor-worker-housing/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2023a, May 17). News release – Growers welcome positive findings of Jamaican report into working conditions on Ontario fruit and vegetable farms. *More than a Migrant Worker* Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/news-release-growers-welc...report-into-working-conditions-on-ontario-fruit-and-vegetable-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2023b, May 17). SAWP? TFW Program? Undocumented? What do these mean?!. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/sawp-tfw-program-undocumented-what-do-these-mean/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2023c, November 16). RE: Closed work permits and temporary foreign workers study [Letter to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration]. *Our Commons*. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/CIMM/Brief/BR12730943/br-external/OntarioFruitAndVegetableGrowersAssociation-e.pdf>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024a). About Us. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/about-us/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024b). Alberto, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/alberto-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024c). Bumper crop for apple growers in Norfolk. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/bumper-crop-for-apple-growers-in-norfolk/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024d). Canada's migrant farm worker fact and information sheet. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/canadas-migrant-worker-fact-and-information-sheet/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024e). Experienced labour on farms. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/experienced-labour-on-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024f). Fernando, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/fernando-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024g). Jorge Mario, Temporary Foreign Worker from Guatemala. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/jorge-mario-temporary-foreign-worker-from-guatemala/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024h). Meet Ángel, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-angel-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024i). Meet Angel, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-angel-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024j). Meet Brian, Apple Grower at Nighthawk Orchards. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-brian-apple-grower-at-nighthawk-orchards/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024k). Meet Bunjong, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Thailand. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-bunjong-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-thailand/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024l). Meet Daniel, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-daniel-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024m). Meet Filimon, Seasonal Agriculture Worker from Mexico. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-filimon-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024n). Meet Little Andre, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-little-andre-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024o). Meet Michael, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-michael-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024p). Meet Terry, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-terry-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2024q). Seasonal Agricultural Worker FAQs. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/faqs/>

Open work permit for vulnerable foreign workers who are victims of abuse. (2024, September 23). *Government of Canada*. Retrieved from

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/permit/temporary/vulnerable-workers.html>

Otero, G., & Preibisch, K. (2016). *Citizenship and Precarious Labour in Canadian Agriculture*. Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Oyewale, D. (2024). *Evaluation of the Impact of the Provincial Policy Statement on International Agricultural Workers' Housing in Ontario [Master's Thesis, University of Guelph]*. University of Guelph Atrium.

Peck, J. (1996). *Workplace: The social regulation of labour markets*. New York: Guilford.

Peacock, T., Moncla, L., Dudas, G., Van Insberghe, D., Sukhova, K., Lloyd-Smith, J., Worobey, M., Lowen, A., & Nelson, M. (2024). The global H5N1 influenza panzootic in mammals. *Nature* 637, 304-313. DOI: 10.1038/s41586-024-08054-z

Pekkanen, T., & Penttila, V. (2021). The responsibility of an ethnocentric consumer - nationalistic, patriotic, or environmentally conscientious? A critical discourse analysis of "buy domestic" campaigns. *International Marketing Review* 38(2), 300-320. DOI 10.1108/IMR-06-2019-0163

Perry, J. (2018). Living at work and intra-worker sociality among migrant farm workers in Canada. *International Migration and Integration* 19, 1021-1036. DOI: 10.1007/s12134-018-0583-z

Philips, N. (2009). Migration as development strategy? The new political economy of dispossession and inequality in the Americas. *Review of International Political Economy* 16(2), 231-259. DOI: 10.1080/09692290802402744

Platt, B. (2024, January 12). Pierre Poilievre pledges to tie immigration levels to homebuilding. *Bloomberg News*. Retrieved from <https://financialpost.com/real-estate/pierre-poilievre-pledges-tie-immigration-levels-homebuilding>

Population growth in Canada's rural areas, 2016-2021. (2022). *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021002/98-200-x2021002-eng.cfm>

Preibisch, K. (2004). Migrant agricultural workers and processes of social inclusion in rural Canada: Encuentros and desencuentros. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 29(57-58), 203-239. DOI: 10.1080/08263663.2004.10816857

Preibisch, K. (2010). *Pick-your-own-labor: migrant workers and flexibility in Canadian agriculture*. *International Migration Review*, 44(2), 404-441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2010.00811.x>

Ramsaroop, C. (2023). Discipline and resistance in Southwestern Ontario: Securitization of migrant workers and acts of defiance. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 23(3), 600-610. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12541>

Rana, U. (2025, September 3). End Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program, Poilievre says. *CBC News*. Retrieved September 10, 2025 from

<https://globalnews.ca/news/11390424/temporary-foreign-worker-program-pierre-poilievre/>

Raza, A. (2022, August 20). Jamaican migrant workers in Ontario pen open letter likening conditions to 'systematic slavery'. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/jamaican-migrant-workers-open-letter-1.6557678>

Reid-Musson, E. (2017). Grown close to home: Migrant farmworker (im)mobilities and unfreedom on Canadian family farms. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 107(3), 716-730. DOI: 10.1080/24694452.2016.1261683

Reid-Musson, E. (2018). Shadow mobilities: Regulating migrant bicyclists in rural Ontario, Canada. *Mobilities* 13 (3), 308-324.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2017.1375397>

Ruhs, M., & Martin, P. (2008). *Numbers vs. rights: Trade-offs and guest worker programs*. *International Migration Review*, 42(1), 249-265. Retrieved from <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315248967-13/numbers-vs-rights-trade-offs-guest-worker-programs-1-martin-ruhs-philip-martin>

Russell, K. (2023, September 29). Home away from home. Foreign workers are fairly treated says fruit grower ... and the workers. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/home-away-from-home-foreign-workers-are-fairly-treated-says-fruit-grower-and-the-workers/>

Samuda, K. (2023). Fact-Finding Team Report: Findings and Recommendations.

Jamaica Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Retrieved from

<https://mlss.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Fact-Finding-REPORT-on-the-Canadian-SAWP-APRIL-2023.pdf>

Sarapura, S., Cupolo, N., Fontecha, M., Potter, C., & Zink, R. (2023). *Invisible and precarious: A scoping review of gender-based violence in agricultural streams of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program*. Guelph: University of Guelph, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development.

Schaer, L. (2021, November 16). Migrant worker programs a win-win for workers and farmers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/migrant-worker-programs-a-win-win-for-workers-and-farmers>

Schaer, L. (2022a, February 15). Canada is welcoming and offers opportunities for a better life, say migrant workers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/canada-is-welcoming-and-offers-opportunities-for-a-better-life-say-migrant-workers>

Schaer, L. (2022b, May 24). Program ensures migrant farm workers have same rights, privileges as Canadian workers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/program-ensures-migrant-farm-workers-have-same-rights-privileges-as-canadian-workers>

Schaer, L. (2023a, June 6). Farmers investing in new migrant worker housing. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/farmers-investing-in-new-migrant-worker-housing>

Schaer, L. (2023b, September 5). *Government-regulated programs key to employment protections for migrant farm workers*. Retrieved from The National Post:

<https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/business-sponsored/ontario-fruit-vegetable-growers-association>

Seo, H. (2021). 'Dual' labour market? Patterns of segmentation in European labour markets and the varieties of precariousness. *Transfer* 27(4), 485-503. DOI: 10.1177/10242589211061070

Shank, D. (2025, September 10). Changes in the works for Temporary Foreign Worker Program, Carney says. *CIC News*. Retrieved September 10, 2025 from

<https://www.cicnews.com/2025/09/changes-in-the-works-for-the-temporary-foreign-worker-program-carney-says-0959715.html>

Silverman, S., & Hari, A. (2016). Troubling the fields: Choice, consent, and coercion of Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers. *International Migration*, 54(5), 91-104.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12266>

Smith, A. (2015). The bunk house rules: A materialist approach to legal consciousness in the context of migrant workers' housing in Ontario. *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 52(3), 863-904. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60082/2817-5069.2958>

- Stark, O. & Bloom, D. (1985). The new economics of labor migration. *The American Economic Review* 75(2), 173-178. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1805591>
- Tannock, S. (2011). Points of prejudice: Education -based discrimination in Canada's immigration system. *Antipode*, 43(4), 1330-1356. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00864.x>
- Taylor, J. (1999). The new economics of labour migration and the role of remittances in the migration process. *International Migration* 37(1), 63-88. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2435.00066
- Taylor, S. (2023, August 1). Poilievre says Canada's immigration system is broken, sidesteps target cut questions. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/poilievre-says-canada-s-immigration-system-is-broken-sidesteps-target-cut-questions/article_ba7a29d2-9375-5bba-a5ac-98a8865cb589.html
- Temporary foreign workers In Canada: Educators' resource. (n.d.) AgScape. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://agscape.ca/uploads/resources/files/20210311-FA-temporary-foreign-workers-in-canada-educators-resource.pdf>
- Temporary foreign workers in the agriculture and agri-food sectors, by industry. (2024, April 18). *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210021801>
- Tham, J., Campbell, I., & Boese, M. (2017). Why is labour protection for temporary migrant workers so fraught? A perspective from Australia. In J. Howe, & R. Owens,

Temporary Labour Migration in the Global Era: Regulatory Challenges (pp. 173-201). Oxford: Hart Publishing.

Timke, E. (2023). The advertising industry's advice on accessibility and disability representation: A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Advertising* 52(5), 706-720.
DOI: 10.1080/00913367.2023.2255248

Tungohan, E., & Careless, J. (2023). Tolerated, threatening and celebrated: How Canadian news media frames temporary migrant workers. *International Migration*, 61(4), 120–138. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13086>

United Steel Workers. (2025, February 14). District 5 update: Standing up for migrant workers. *United Steel Workers*. Retrieved June 21, 2025 from <https://usw.ca/district-5-update-standing-up-for-migrant-workers/>

Van Dijk, T. (2015). Introduction: What is critical discourse analysis. In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 466-485). Hoboken, Joahn Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Vosko, L., Basok, T., Spring, C., Candiz, G., & George, G. (2022). Understanding migrant farmworkers' health and well-being during the global COVID-19 pandemic in Canada: Toward a transnational conceptualization of employment strain. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(4), 8574. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19148574>

Vosko, L., & Spring, C. (2021). COVID-19 outbreaks in Canada and the crisis of migrant farmworkers' social reproduction: Transnational labour and the need for greater accountability among receiving states. *Journal of International Migration and*

Integration, 23, 1765-1791. Retrieved from

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12134-021-00905-2>

Weiler, A., & Grez, E. (2022). Rotten asparagus and just-in-time workers: Canadian agricultural industry framing of farm labour and food security during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Canadian Food Studies* 9(2), 38-52. DOI: 10.15353/cfs-rcea.v9i2.521

Weiler, A., McLaughlin, J., & Cole, D. (2017). Food security at whose expense? A critique of the Canadian temporary farm labour migration regime and proposals for change. *International Migration* 55(4), 48-63. DOI: 10.1111/imig.12342

Wells, D., McLaughlin, J., Lyn, A., & Díaz Mendiburo, A. (2014). Sustaining precarious transnational families: The significance of remittances from Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. *Just Labour*, 144-167. Retrieved from https://scholars.wlu.ca/brantford_hs/4/

Weiler, A., Otero, G., & Wittman, H. (2016). Rock stars and bad apples: Moral economies of alternative food networks and precarious farm work regimes. *Antipode* 48(4), 1140-1162. DOI: 10.1111/anti.12221

Who we are. (n.d.). *Justicia for Migrant Workers*. Retrieved from <https://harvestingfreedom.org/who-we-are/>

Wilhelm, T. (2023, August 2). Federal inspections show most Ontario employers follow rules protecting migrant workers. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from *Windsor Star*. <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/federal-inspections-show-most-ontario-employers-follow-rules-protecting-migrant-workers>

Wodak, R. (2021). Critical discourse studies. In K. Hyland, B. Paltridge, & L. Wong, The Bloomsbury Handbook of Discourse Analysis (pp. 35-50). New York: Bloomsbury Academic

Zimonjic, P. (2025, September 3). Poilievre calls for Temporary Foreign Worker Program to be scrapped. *CBC News*. Retrieved September 10, 2025 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/poilievre-wants-temporary-foreign-worker-program-scrapped-1.7623864>

Appendix I: List of Selected Texts for Critical Discourse Analysis

Antonacci, J. (2022, October 18). Bumper crop for apple growers in norfolk. *Ontario*

Farmer. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.ontariofarmer.com/news/local-news/bumper-crop-for-apple-growers-in-norfolk/wcm/3ba00bc9-0384-48fd-9ee0-64b61474019d>

A better life is why we come to Canada, say migrant farm workers. (2023, August 16).

Toronto Star. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/sponsored-sections/a-better-life-is-why-we-come-to-canada-say-migrant-farm-workers/article_507db3d6-3163-5821-a73b-8cbb99387646.html

Canadian Grocer Staff. (2023, September 18). Fruit and vegetable growers push back

against UN expert comments linking foreign worker programs to 'slavery'. *Canadian*

Grocer. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://canadiangrocer.com/fruit-and-vegetable-growers-push-back-against-un-expert-comments-linking-foreign-worker-programs>

Coles, P. (2022, September 22). Grape King Ben Froese: 'It's workers who make this

possible'. *Niagara-on-the-Lake Local*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.notilocal.com/local-news/grape-king-ben-froese-its-workers-who-make-this-possible-6250975>

Davidson, K. (2021, July 6). Farm moms always work from home. *The Grower*.

Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://thegrower.org/news/farm-moms-always-work-home>

- Davidson, K. (2023, January 23). Spacious quarters improve lives of temporary foreign workers. *The Grower*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://thegrower.org/news/spacious-quarters-improve-lives-temporary-foreign-workers>
- Denard, C. (2022, August 24). Industry campaign highlights migrant workers' stories. *Ontario Farmer*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/industry-campaign-highlights-migrant-workers-stories/>
- Edwards, L. (2022, February 22). Pandemic highlighted the importance of Niagara's migrant farmworkers. *Grimsby Lincoln News*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from https://www.niagarathisweek.com/life/pandemic-highlighted-the-importance-of-niagara-s-migrant-farmworkers/article_5ab34f3b-991d-5325-a635-b15d7eb02313.html?
- Hutton, R. (2023, October 13). NOTL migrant worker bike program a second career for skilled volunteers. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/notl-migrant-worker-bike-program-a-second-career-for-skilled-volunteers/>
- Migrant farm workers proud of work in Canada. (2023, July 5). *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/sponsored_sections/2023/07/01/migrant-farm-workers-proud-of-work-in-canada.html

Migrant workers fair in Essex County a success. (2023, May 1). *Farms.com*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.farms.com/ag-industry-news/migrant-workers-fair-in-essex-county-a-success-958.aspx>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] About us. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/about-us/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Alberto, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/alberto-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Alexander, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/alexander-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Andre, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-little-andre-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Ángel, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-angel-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Antonio (Tony), Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/antonio-tony-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Artemio (Timmy), Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/artemio-timmy-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Aubrey, fruit orchard employee and Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/aubrey-fruit-orchard-employee-and-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Baker, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/baker-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Baldeo, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant*

Worker. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/baldeo-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Canada's migrant farm worker fact and information sheet. (2023, September 25). *More than a Migrant*

Worker. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/canadas-migrant-worker-fact-and-information-sheet/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Carlos M., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18,

2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/carlos-m-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Carlos, Seasonal

Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/carlos-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Celebrating community

success with the Greenhouse worker Vaccination Education – Community

Collaboration in Motionreenhouse worker Vaccination Education. (2021, June 9).

More than a Migrant Worker. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/celebrating-community-succ...nity-collaboration-in-motiongreenhouse-worker-vaccination-education/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Coralee, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/coralee-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Cordia, Seasonal Agricultural Worker, working on a fruit farm. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/cordia-seasonal-agricultural-worker-working-on-fruit-farm/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Desrine, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/desrine-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Eduardo (Pina), Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/eduardo-pina-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Elder P., Guest Worker from Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/elder-p-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Experienced labour on farms. (2023, October 27). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/experienced-labour-on-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Facts and stats. *More than a Migrant Worker*. (2024). Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/facts-stats/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Facundo, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/facundo-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Felena, Farm Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/felena-farm-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Fernando, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/fernando-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Fidencio, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024) *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/fidencio-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Frances and Quitia, Mother/daughter team of Seasonal Agricultural Workers from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/frances-and-quitia-mother-daughter-team-of-seasonal-agricultural-workers-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Fruit and vegetable farmers push back on reports of poor worker housing. (2021, June 14). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/fruit-and-vegetable-farmers-push-back-on-reports-of-poor-worker-housing/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] George, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/george-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Gervacio E., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/gervacio-e-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Giovanni C., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/giovanni-c-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Greenhouse cup soccer tournament. *More than a Migrant Worker*. (2022, July 13). Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/greenhouse-cup-soccer-tournament/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Hopeton and Denroy, Father/son team of Seasonal Agricultural Workers from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/hopeton-and-denroy-father-son-team-of-seasonal-agricultural-workers-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Israel L., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/israel-l-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Jaime, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/jaime-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Jaime, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/jaime-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico-2/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Jeremiah, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/jeremiah-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Jorge C., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/jorge-c-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Jorge Mario, Temporary Foreign Worker from Guatemala. (2024). *More than a Migrant*
Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] *Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/jorge-mario-temporary-foreign-worker-from-guatemala/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Jose M., Guest Worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/jose-m-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] The journey to Canada for SAWP workers. (2023, July 19). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/the-journey-to-canada-for-sawp-workers/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Juan Carlos, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/juan-carlos-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Juan J., Guest Worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/juan-j-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Julio, Temporary Foreign Worker from Guatemala. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/julio-temporary-foreign-worker-from-guatemala/>

Keinlen, A. (2021, September 7). Ground work. *Chatelaine*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from https://www.farmfoodcareon.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CHE09_LF_FARMERS-July-29-4.pdf

Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers [OGVG]. (2020, October 3). Misconceptions about the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). *Ogvg.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.ogvg.com/foreign-worker-program>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Keron, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/keron-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Kishore, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/kishore-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Livian, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/livian-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Marco Antonio, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/marco-antonio-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Marino, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/marino-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] María Gonzales, Temporary Foreign Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/maria-gonzales-temporary-foreign-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Martin S., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/martin-s-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Martin, D. (2022, October 5). Foreign agriculture workers key to Norfolk County orchard's success. *Farmtario*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://farmtario.com/news/foreign-agriculture-workers-key-to-norfolk-county-orchards-success/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Barrington, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-barrington-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Brian, Apple Grower at Nighthawk Orchards. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-brian-apple-grower-at-nighthawk-orchards/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Adam, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-adam-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Antonio, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-antonio-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Bunjong, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Thailand. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-bunjong-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-thailand/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Carlos, Seasonal Agriculture Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-carlos-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Celso, Seasonal Agricultural from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-celso-migrant-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Chaplin, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-chaplin-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Chrishaine, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-chrishaine-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Daniel, Seasonal Agricultural from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-daniel-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet David, Seasonal Agricultural from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-david-sesonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Delroy, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-delory-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Dykelon, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-dykelon-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Efrain, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-efrain-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Efreeen, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-efreen-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Ermel, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-ermel/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Errol, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-errol-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Esteban, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-esteban-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Fermin, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-fermin-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Filberto and German Magin, Seasonal Agricultural Workers from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-filberto-and-german-magin-seasonal-agricultural-workers-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Filimon, Seasonal Agriculture Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-filimon-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Gerardo, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-gerardo-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Grape Grower, Lee. *More than a Migrant Worker*. (2024). Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-grape-grower-lee/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Greg, Fruit Grower at Ardiel Acres. *More than a Migrant Worker*. (2024). Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-greg-fruit-grower-at-ardiel-acres/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Humberto, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-humberto-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Jesús, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-jesus-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet John, Fruit Grower at Ardiel Acres. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-john-fruit-grower-at-ardiel-acres/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Juan, Seasonal Agriculture Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-juan-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Juan Antonio, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-juan-antonio-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Leon, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-leon-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Leroy, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-leroy-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Leticia, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-leticia-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Luis, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-luis-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Luiz, Seasonal Agriculture Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-luiz-seasonal-agriculture-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Mario, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-mario/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Michael, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-michael-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Nahum, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-nahum-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Nataliia, Farm Worker from Ukraine. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-nataliia-farm-worker-from-ukraine/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Paul, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-paul-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Perry, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-perry-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Punuwat, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Thailand. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-punuwat-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-thailand/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Rayon, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-rayon-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Siven, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-siven-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Terry, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-terry-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Vivian (Rice), Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-vivian-rice-seasonal-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Wanwipa, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Thailand. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-wanwipa-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-thailand/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Meet Zico, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Barbados. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/meet-zico-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-barbados/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Mellissa, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/mellissa-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Migrant farm workers' access to healthcare in Ontario. (2023, March 9). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/migrant-farm-workers-access-to-healthcare-in-ontario/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] (2023, May 1). Government programs bring migrant workers to Ontario fruit and vegetable farms. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.thestar.com/sponsored->

[sections/government-programs-bring-migrant-workers-to-ontario-fruit-and-vegetable-farms/article_8877c92a-9e51-5e4a-95f4-c8224b474b33.html](https://www.thestar.com/sponsored-sections/government-programs-bring-migrant-workers-to-ontario-fruit-and-vegetable-farms/article_8877c92a-9e51-5e4a-95f4-c8224b474b33.html)

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2023, August 16).

Canadian farm jobs can pave the way for permanent residency for migrant workers. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from https://www.thestar.com/sponsored-sections/canadian-farm-jobs-can-pave-the-way-for-permanent-residency-for-migrant-workers/article_52e6cc48-269d-5616-9728-af847fbde0b0.html

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2023, August 16). Family,

friendship, and farms define life for Ontario's migrant farm workers. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from https://www.thestar.com/sponsored-sections/family-friendship-and-farms-define-life-for-ontario-s-migrant-farm-workers/article_2e1cf30a-ccdd-54a9-aac7-9670730e4ffe.html

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2023, August 16). More

opportunities for their families bring migrant farm workers to Canada. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from https://www.thestar.com/sponsored-sections/more-opportunities-for-their-families-bring-migrant-farm-workers-to-canada/article_a340b2c4-8d07-5807-af1e-01db27b89167.html

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA]. (2023, November 10).

Soccer tournament sheds light on the many hobbies of migrant farm workers. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

https://www.thestar.com/sponsored-sections/soccer-tournament-sheds-light-on-the-many-hobbies-of-migrant-farm-workers/article_39188252-7ce0-11ee-aa08-176132c27b52.html

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Myron, Fruit Orchard Employee and Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/myron-fruit-orchard-employee-and-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Neil, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/neil-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] A new resource for educators about Temporary Foreign Workers. (2021, June 7). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/a-new-resource-for-educators-about-temporary-foreign-workers/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] News release – Growers welcome positive findings of Jamaican report into working conditions on Ontario fruit and vegetable farms. (2023, May 17). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/news->

[release-growers-welc...report-into-working-conditions-on-ontario-fruit-and-vegetable-farms/](#)

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Nicholas, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/nicholas/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] (2023, August 10). Fruit and vegetable growers welcome Recognized Employer Pilot for temporary foreign workers. *Ofvga.org*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.ofvga.org/news-releases/fruit-and-vegetable-growers-welcome-recognized-employer-pilot-for-temporary-foreign-workers>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Paulino, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/paulino/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Percy, Seasonal Agricultural Worker. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/percy-seasonal-agricultural-worker/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Pieces, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad & Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/pieces-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Prince and Ricardo, Father/Son Team of Seasonal Agricultural Workers from Jamaica. (2024). Retrieved February 18, 2024 from *More than a Migrant Worker*.

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/prince-and-ricardo-father-son-team-of-seasonal-agricultural-workers-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Ricardo, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/ricardo-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Ryan H., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/ryan-h-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Ryan, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Trinidad and Tobago. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/ryan-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-trinidad-and-tobago/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Salvadore, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. (2024). Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/salvadore-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] SAWP? TFW Program? Undocumented? What do these mean?!. (2023, May 17). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/sawp-tfw-program-undocumented-what-do-these-mean/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Seasonal Agricultural Workers FAQs. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/faqs/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Soccer tournament shows off the talent of local migrant farm workers. (2023, September 5). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/soccer-tournament-shows-off-the-talent-of-local-migrant-farm-workers/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Tackesha, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved

February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/tackesha-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Tyrone J., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/tyrone-j-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Victorino, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Mexico. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/victorino-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-mexico/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Welcome kits for arriving migrant farm workers. (2023, June 26). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/welcome-kits-for-arriving-migrant-farm-workers/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] What do migrant farm workers' wages and expenses look like?. (2023, April 17). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/what-do-migrant-farm-workers-wages-and-expenses-look-like/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] What is the housing situation like for migrant farm workers?. (2023, December 11). *More than a Migrant*

Worker. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from

<https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/what-is-the-housing-situation-like-for-migrant-farm-workers/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Yenifer L., Guest worker at Nature Fresh Farms. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/yenifer-l-guest-worker-at-nature-fresh-farms/>

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association [OFVGA] Yvonne, Seasonal Agricultural Worker from Jamaica. (2024). *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/profiles/yvonne-seasonal-agricultural-worker-from-jamaica/>

Russell, K. (2023, September 29). Home away from home. Foreign workers are fairly treated says fruit grower ... and the workers. *More than a Migrant Worker*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://www.morethanamigrantworker.ca/news/home-away-from-home-foreign-workers-are-fairly-treated-says-fruit-grower-and-the-workers/>

Schaer, L. (2021, November 16). Migrant worker programs a win-win for workers and farmers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/migrant-worker-programs-a-win-win-for-workers-and-farmers>

Schaer, L. (2022, February 15). Canada is welcoming and offers opportunities for a better life, say migrant workers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/canada-is-welcoming-and-offers-opportunities-for-a-better-life-say-migrant-workers>

Schaer, L. (2022, May 24). Program ensures migrant farm workers have same rights, privileges as Canadian workers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/program-ensures-migrant-farm-workers-have-same-rights-privileges-as-canadian-workers>

Schaer, L. (2022, August 15). Working in Canada a long-term commitment for many migrant farm workers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/business-sponsored/importance-of-migrant-workers-in-canada>

Schaer, L. (2023, March 21). Migrant farm workers arriving in Canada for new growing season. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/migrant-farm-workers-arriving-in-canada-for-new-growing-season?r>

Schaer, L. (2023, June 6). Farmers investing in new migrant worker housing. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/news-sponsored/farmers-investing-in-new-migrant-worker-housing>

Schaer, L. (2023, September 5). Government-regulated programs key to employment protections for migrant farm workers. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024

from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/business-sponsored/ontario-fruit-vegetable-growers-association>

Schaer, L. (2023, October 23). Migrant farm workers keen to return home as growing season ends. *National Post*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://nationalpost.com/sponsored/business-sponsored/migrant-farm-workers-keen-to-return-home-as-growing-season-ends>

Seasonal worker program essential part of Canada's ag industry. (2023, June 1). *Fresh Plaza*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from https://www.freshplaza.com/asia/article/9534133/seasonal-worker-program-essential-part-of-canada-s-ag-industry/?utm_medium=email

Shreve, E. (2023, April 13). Health program expanding to serve hundreds of temporary foreign workers in Chatham-Kent. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from *Chatham Daily News*. <https://www.chathamdailynews.ca/news/local-news/health-program-expanding-to-serve-hundreds-of-temporary-foreign-workers-in-chatham-kent>

Temporary foreign workers In Canada: Educators' resource. (n.d.) *AgScape*. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from <https://agscape.ca/uploads/resources/files/20210311-FA-temporary-foreign-workers-in-canada-educators-resource.pdf>

Wilhelm, T. (2023, August 2). Federal inspections show most Ontario employers follow rules protecting migrant workers. Retrieved February 18, 2024 from *Windsor Star*. <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/federal-inspections-show-most-ontario-employers-follow-rules-protecting-migrant-workers>

Appendix II: List of Codes Captured During Critical Discourse Analysis

Code	Description	Files Referenced	Individual References
Workers returning to farms	Descriptions of workers returning to Canada and/or to the same farm for multiple years	121	149
Workers' Homes and Families	Descriptions of workers' home lives, families, relationships, etc.	121	207
Worker sentiment	Descriptions of workers' feeling (positive or negative) towards various things about working in Canada (e.g., their employers, the work, Canadians, etc.)	108	184
Reasons for working in Canada	Descriptions of workers' motivations or reasons for coming to Canada as migrant farm workers	94	131
Canadians	Descriptions of workers' feelings of or experiences with Canadians or Canadian society generally	36	45
Thanking/acknowledging workers	Instances of the someone from the agri-food industry (i.e., representatives and employers) thanking migrant workers or acknowledging the importance of their work	36	56
Economic development	References to the current state of economic development in migrant workers' home countries	34	41

Wages	References to migrant workers' wages in Canada	34	48
Working conditions	Descriptions of the conditions migrant workers encounter in their Canadian workplaces	29	34
COVID	References to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated issues (e.g., travel restrictions, public health measures, etc.)	28	52
Support for workers	Descriptions of supports available to workers from various sources, (e.g., employers, community groups, government, etc.) to help them during their stay in Canada	26	52
Living conditions	Descriptions of the conditions migrant workers encounter in employer-provided housing in Canada	25	26
Healthcare	References to migrant workers' healthcare in Canada, including its availability and accessibility	24	49
Migration policy	Reference to Canadian laws and policies governing the terms of migration streams under the TFWP	24	51
Employer obligations	Reference to obligations placed on employers as a result of their participation in a migrant labour stream (e.g., providing housing, transportation, etc.)	23	37

Government oversight	Reference to government oversight of migrant labour streams, including workplace inspections	23	52
Skill and training	Descriptions of the skills migrant workers have and/or training that they receive to perform their jobs in Canada	23	28
Misinformation	Reference to alleged misinformation surrounding migrant labour in the agri-food industry	20	42
Friendships	Descriptions of friendships occurring between migrant workers and each other, employers, Canadians, etc.	19	23
Housing	Descriptions of migrant worker housing structures, construction, challenges etc.	19	52
Feeding Canadians	Reference to the idea of migrant workers and/or the agri-food sector providing food for Ontario/Canada residents	18	24
Workers' rights	Reference to the rights migrant workers have in Canada	17	28
Temporary to permanent	Reference to the possibility/occurrences of migrant workers transitioning to permanent residency in Canada	16	29
Labour shortage	Reference to the existence of a labour shortage in the agri-food industry	13	23

Media	Reference to the role of Canadian media in shaping perception of migrant farm workers	7	14
Undocumented workers	Reference to migrant workers who do not enter Canada through a legal migration stream	7	8
Language barriers	Reference to difficulties posed by language barriers for some migrant workers	6	7
Mistreatment	Reference to mistreatment of migrant workers by their employers	6	9
Farm profitability	Reference to the profitability of farms associated with employment of migrant workers	5	8
Activists	Reference to migrant workers' rights advocacy groups	3	3
Gender	Description of the role of gender in migrant workers' experiences	3	3
Jamaica report	Reference to a report published by the government of Jamaica following an investigation into the SAWP	3	6
UN report	Reference to the report of UN Special Rapporteur Tomoya Obakata upon his visit to Canada	3	5