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**Migrant rights activists denounce Canada's Federal Government for stripping away  
Employment Insurance benefit for migrant workers**

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**(Toronto)** Migrant worker advocates are angered and shocked to learn that the Federal Government is once again attacking one of Canada's most vulnerable populations.

Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Diane Finley announced on December 6<sup>th</sup> the elimination of Employment Insurance (EI) special benefits (parental, maternal and compassionate benefits) for migrant workers employed under Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker program. The minister failed to report that these workers will continue to pay into this social protection fund, as they have been doing so since 1966, yet now will no longer be able to collect these benefits.

Migrant workers perform back-breaking dangerous jobs and pay into government social protection programs yet they are consistently denied the benefits of such programs. It is estimated that migrant workers have contributed \$ 3.4 million annually into Canada's Employment Insurance scheme. However it was not until 2002 that *some* migrant workers started to access special benefits. Over the last ten years, workers from the Caribbean and Mexico have benefited from parental benefits to provide much needed support for their newly born children. By eliminating this benefit the federal government is in fact eliminating one of the few income supports that are available to migrant workers employed under Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Programs.

Junior Sylvester a twelve year veteran of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program says "The elimination of these special benefits violates the nature of the Employment Insurance act that was put into place to protect our families and our children from falling into poverty".

"For over forty years migrant workers have been subsidizing Canada's EI fund yet have been 'ineligible' to receive full benefits, and now they are being completely stripped away from the few special benefits they were able to access. This is completely unjust and outrageous" says Justicia for Migrant Workers' organizer Adriana Paz Ramirez. Given this situation, Paz Ramirez states that "the fight right now should be to restore this benefit and to fully include migrant workers into social protection programs rather than eliminating access and reinforcing a system that perpetuates exclusion and marginalization of migrant workers".

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