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Section D- Essay

Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) have been used to fill positions that can't or won't be filled by Canadians. There are many positive repercussions, as well as some negative. Positive impact includes shorter waiting time for services or goods for the consumer, the employer gains skilled work labour and can fill the demand for his product or service, and the worker gets a better paying job than they could get in home country, possibly in a more stable and safe country, and chance to become a permanent citizen in a country where they can find work. Negative repercussions include the TFWs may not know their rights or who to turn to in case of potential exploitation, the workers being used by cheating employers and being unable to fight back, the perceptions that Canadians can fill these jobs, and the negative image the country or province gains if exploitation is found.

Although they may not realize it, the consumer needs TFWs. Canadians have grown used to getting the service and products they want when they want it. Bringing in workers fill the gap and create the services and products that Canadians need. For example, in 2006, a technical position in Grande Prairie for Alberta Environment was advertised. There were no Canadian applicants for this position. This forced Alberta Environment to look beyond their borders for someone qualified and interested in the position. This shows the problematic perception among the public that Canadian jobs are being 'taken away' and given to foreign workers. The simple fact is that Canadians are taking the jobs they want and there are left-over positions that need to be filled.

Employers also gain from TFWs. They gain profit and are able to fill the demand for their product or service. However, some companies have incidents of death of TFWs, such as the two Chinese men working in Alberta and two Thai workers in Ontario. In a report written by the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) in 2007, employers have given inaccurate job descriptions, changed or gotten rid of the job when TFWs arrive, give lower wage than promised, not to mention the horrifying reports of inappropriate demands for personal services mixed with threats of deportation or imprisonment and racist behaviors. There have also been several cases of illegal charge fees and giving substandard housing for extreme rent. Unions, including AUPE and AFL, have stepped up to the challenge and decided to fight these unscrupulous employers who are willing to exploit their workers.

As newly-elected AUPE president Doug Knight explains,
"We're not opposed to foreign workers being brought into Alberta," explained Knight. "We do, however, object to employers exploiting these workers to escape legal obligations, to maximize profits and to avoid honouring existing collective agreements. We are prepared to fight vigorously against employers who participate in this type of unacceptable corporate behaviour."

The TFWs also gains in Canada agreeing to bring in foreign workers. They are gaining meaningful employment in a safe country or province, and have a chance to become permanent citizens. Even if they do to want to become citizens, they are still subject to our laws and under the same protection. Yet, TFWs are usually unaware of their labour and working rights in Canada, Alberta and other provinces. Most TFWs may not realize they are being exploited and even if they do, may not know who to turn to for help. The employers, province and country all look bad for the exploitation of workers going on in their backyard.

The government needs to change its existing system to help aid these TFWs. They cannot use past systems because never before have TFW been needed like this. The current system allows immoral employers the chance to unfairly use workers. The government needs to check on all companies gaining TFWs, and maintain frequent check-ups and interviews to maintain an unspoiled workforce. This is where unions come in, as the link between government, employer and employee. Unions like AUPE and AFL have a future in fighting for the TFW and their rights; the government should enlist the aid of the unions in educating and monitoring the employers who hire TFWs.