OUT OF NECESSITY AND INTO THE FIELDS: MIGRANT FARMWORKERS IN ST RÉMI, QUEBEC

by

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Abstract

The province of Ontario is the primary focus of a growing body of research discussing migrant agricultural labour in Canada. This thesis shifts the focus of inquiry to Quebec, a province that has not received the attention it warrants, given that it is “home” to the second largest temporary migrant population in Canada. Currently, Mexicans constitute the bulk of labourers contracted through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). With the establishment in 2003 of the Foreign Worker Program (FWP), however, the number of Guatemalans on the Quebec scene has increased significantly. The situation of workers from both countries is addressed in the form of a case study of St. Rémi. The thesis argues that the migrant experience in St. Rémi is characterized by a struggle to cope with: (1) an “unfree” labour status; (2) social and geographical isolation; and (3) lack of social assistance and community acknowledgement. An attempt is made to give migrant workers a voice, since their contribution for the most part is either unknown or unappreciated. The support system now in place in St. Rémi affords migrants some minimal rights, but much remains to be done, in Quebec and across Canada, to make the plight of workers better known and their situation improved.
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Introduction

This thesis examines the predicament of migrant workers who have become an integral part of the Canadian labour scene and rural landscape, men from Mexico and Guatemala who contribute to the Canadian economy without much acknowledgement or appreciation, and with very limited social rights. Literature on such phenomena in Canada is steadily growing, but most of it focuses on seasonal migrants in Ontario. My thesis expands on the subject by examining the situation of migrant workers in Quebec, a subject that has not been dealt with in any substantive way.

A study by Kerry Preibisch (2004) on the impact of migrants in Ontario in the face of social exclusion has had a strong influence over my approach and application. Preibisch explains that personal ties and the emergence of non-state actors, who attempt to ensure that workers are allowed access to rights they are entitled to, have helped to initiate positive transformations in the rural host community. In extending this approach to Quebec, and by placing a stronger emphasis on Western concepts of how socio-economic status influences an individual’s access to rights, I wish to illustrate that the migrant experience is one that resonates at various levels of engagement. While Preibisch demonstrates how non-state actors have a positive impact on the lives of workers, I will bring to light several negative factors, among them that very little support and recognition is afforded migrant workers in Quebec.

Defining the Migrant Experience

Even though the presence of Mexican and Guatemalan seasonal farm workers has a profound impact in transforming the rural landscape, the migrant imprint goes almost unacknowledged and unnoticed in Quebec. In my thesis, therefore, I intend to argue that
the power of privileged socio-economic status in a labour-receiving country has granted the state and employers considerable control over the labour of migrants, hindering the ability of seasonal farm workers to enhance their living and working conditions. Moreover, even though migrant workers require the assistance of “support systems” to gain access to certain rights and benefits, such recourse is not effectively extended to seasonal farm workers. As a result, the migrant experience in Quebec can be defined as one of struggle to cope with three pervasive obstacles: (1) an “unfree,” dispossessed status; (2) social and geographical isolation in the rural landscape; and (3) lack of support and acknowledgement in the space and situation in which they find themselves.

Gardner (1995, 3) contends that migration is an inherently contradictory term, arguing that this globalized process “brings economic, social, and geographical mobility, yet in other ways heightens social and economic dependence.” Migration requires further and thorough investigation, since it is such a complex and conflicted process. Academic literature continues to focus on the structural paradigm of migration, without bearing in mind individual experiences and perspectives. In order to take into account the contradictory nature of migration, both approaches need to be included. Without privileging theory over micro-level data collected during field work, I have attempted to construct an all-encompassing study that recognizes the value of both forms of analysis.

My thesis explores the experience of temporary migrant workers in Quebec. It is an experience shaped by both neoliberal restructuring of the global labour market and a superimposed temporary “unfree” status, an experience in turn defined by migrant struggle for recognition in the labour-receiving society. I approach the topic by

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1 “Unfree” is a term that makes reference to conditions of “forced labour” in which people are employed under duress by the threat of detention, poverty, violence, or other forms of destitution (Basok 1999).
investigating several key questions. Why do migrant workers struggle to gain access to certain rights in a space in which they are assigned a non-permanent status? What is being done to improve their situation in the host community? What is the micro-level impact that migrant workers have on the rural landscape of St. Rémi, a community in Quebec I focus on as a case study? How are migrant contributions being recognized in the place in which they are seasonally located? Ultimately, I wish to draw attention to the concerns that migrant workers have voiced in their call for change.

The migrant worker experience, defined by the underappreciated and devaluation of their contributions, resonates across all of Canada. Studies conducted in both Alberta and Ontario by Smart (1997), Basok (2002), Preibisch (2004), and Bauder (2006), to name but a few researchers, substantiate the argument that migrant agricultural workers are subjected to exploitation and social exclusion as a direct result of their non-permanent status. I decided to select a geographical area that has yet to be thoroughly examined in academic literature but that nonetheless illustrates the common experience amongst migrant workers in Canada. As one of the central farming communities in Quebec, and a town where a large number of migrant workers travel to on a weekly basis, St. Rémi is the ideal site for a case study (See Figure 1.1). Currently, seasonal worker programs allow wealthier countries to fill the growing void of workers in the “unskilled” labour market without having to provide migrants with a permanent status. Major changes occurring in the province of Quebec have the potential to influence the entire Canadian agricultural landscape and North American concepts of migrant workers.
Why Quebec?

One of the major changes to the Quebec agricultural landscape has been the introduction, in 2003, of Guatemalans as seasonal workers. Typically, agricultural labourers have been recruited from Mexico and Caribbean countries through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP); however, recent changes and the implementation of the Foreign Worker Program (FWP) have allowed Guatemalans to be contracted. As a result, both Guatemalans and Mexicans are investigated in this study. Mexicans currently
constitute the largest number of migrant workers in Quebec, but the number of
Guatemalans is growing rapidly. There are notable differences between the Guatemalan
and Mexican experience, by drawing on these two separate groups I wish to illustrate how
the migrant experience resonates not only across geographical sites, but also across
nationalized identities.

Given the non-permanent status with which migrant farm workers must contend,
this vulnerable group requires the assistance of “support systems” in accessing certain
rights and benefits. Even though Quebec has the second largest number of migrant farm
workers in Canada, after Ontario, support is not effectively afforded temporary migrants
who reside for months at a time in the province. The limited assistance offered to
seasonal workers employed in Quebec is simply inadequate and at odds with their
palpable contribution to the Quebec economy. A call for change and improvements from
temporary migrants demonstrates clear discontent with their living and working
conditions.

Migrant Voices

Since my thesis places an emphasis on the experience of underappreciated
migrants, it is important that their voices and stories be highlighted. This thesis will
argue that the status imposed on seasonal labourers by host communities silences them,
making it ever more critical to hear what they have to say.

Without the proper forum to verbalize their concerns and the fear of being
persecuted for voicing them, migrant workers will continue to be undervalued and
unacknowledged. By featuring the voices of migrant workers, this study seeks to
illustrate that they have much to contribute and much we can learn from. While no names
or identifying indicators will be utilized, I feel that the issues I highlight allow for the
construction of a composite voice. I have interviewed a sufficient number of seasonal labourers to come to the realization that they all share similar concerns and difficulties, ones that continue to go unheeded by mainstream Canada.

**Thesis Structure**

The thesis starts with a preamble recounting the unfortunate experience of one seasonal worker whose search for a better life is marked by trauma and injury. The three chapters of Part One lay out the conceptual orientations. Chapters One and Two examine pertinent academic literature on the subject. Chapter One reviews literature that discusses the economics of temporary migration by examining the global restructuring of labour markets and the impact that this has had on seasonal workers at the micro-level both in their home country and in the host country. My critique of pertinent literature then examines, in Chapter Two, how the social imposition of a non-permanent status has affected the ability of migrant workers to gain access to certain rights in their host community.

Chapter Three presents scenarios for seasonal farm labourers across Canada. The chapter begins by sketching socio-economic conditions in Mexico and Guatemala, drawing on the principal motivators for outward migration. It highlights the shared experience that Latin American countries have in dealing with superimposed neoliberal restructuring and how migration has become a general response to these external interventions. The contractual stipulations of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and the Foreign Worker Program (FWP) are then outlined, with a statistical survey presented of the number of migrants in Quebec. Chapter Three closes with an overview of agriculture in Quebec, illustrating the significant impact that farming still has in the province.
The four chapters of Part Two discuss empirical observations. Chapter Four outlines the methodological approaches I pursued to engage the research issues I found in the field. Chapter Five discusses the impact that Mexican and Guatemalan migrant workers have in St. Rémi, Quebec, documenting the experiences of migrants in this farming community. I then examine, in Chapter Six, the migrant “support systems” in Quebec, with an emphasis on St. Rémi. Chapter Seven gives voice to the concerns I heard seasonal labourers repeatedly express.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of migrant views of my work. I summarize their views, ones from which I have learned a great deal. I end by reflecting on the need to conduct further research on the role and contribution of seasonal agricultural labourers in Canada.
Preamble

A Cautionary Tale

Migrant agricultural workers have extraordinary and often harrowing stories to tell, and I will feature what I have learned from and about them in the pages that follow. While many seasonal labourers I spoke with have misgivings about being in Canada, the unfortunate experience of one man stands out. Even though he must remain nameless, the story of his plight I believe to be a compelling point of departure, for it cuts to the quick of the risks, vulnerability, and potential for exploitation that charge the situations I encountered in the course of conducting my research.

What the man told me is as follows:

This is the story of the accident that would forever change my life, giving me the courage to speak out against the injustices that I endured and that many other migrants have also faced. It all began on a day like any other, but with one exception. Heading out to work in the field, the operator of the tractor would not allow me to sit up front with him. Instead, he instructed me to position myself at the rear of the tractor, amongst a pile of large irrigation tubes that were loaded on an attached trailer. I had to hold on as we drove out to the field.

We drove over rough terrain. As the tractor driver abruptly changed gears, I did my best to maintain my balance so as not to fall off. This, however, proved to be difficult, and in a futile attempt to stay on the back of the tractor, I ended up being thrown against the tubes, hurting my back in the process.

Though I was unable to prevent myself from being thrown around, the operator kept on driving and made no attempt to stop. I fell off into the wheel well of the tractor, injuring myself instantly. Hearing my cries, the operator finally stopped. This action caused one of my legs to become stuck in the wheel. I was unable to remove it. The operator, becoming very alarmed, attempted to remove my leg from the wheel by driving the tractor backwards and forwards. As he did this, I was run over repeatedly, and dragged.
Fortunately, a co-worker ran up to the driver side of the tractor, turned off the engine, and took away the keys before the operator could do me any more harm. Other workers then rushed to my aid, helping to remove me from underneath the wheel; however, by this point I was already seriously injured. My body hurt all over. It was difficult to move because of the pain. Unsure of what was wrong with me, I asked my fellow workers to help me up and with their assistance I hobbled three hundred metres to my house on the farm.

Neighbouring farmers came over to tell me that they had been informed of my accident. With their help I was able to change clothes so I could be taken to receive medical attention at the hospital. Unfortunately, my employer was away at the time of the accident and I was unable to go the hospital because he had all of my documents. An hour and a half later my employer finally showed up. I was taken to the hospital where I waited another three hours to be attended to by a doctor, who informed me that I would have to stay overnight for observation. At the hospital I was left alone in my misery. Neither my employer nor the consulate were there to act as translators or offer me support and assistance. It was a Quebecois friend who came to the hospital and acted as my interpreter. After I was discharged, my employer had to bring me back two more times to the hospital so that medical personnel could remove sacs of blood that had accumulated on my side.

Realizing that I was then of no use to him, my employer began to pressure me to leave his farm. The consulate also wanted me to return to Mexico. I quickly came to realize the injustice of the situation and decided to stay in the country and fight my case. The Quebecois friend who helped me at the hospital allowed me to stay with her and then I moved in with another friend for about two months. Eventually I found someone in Montreal, who offered me assistance to fight my case. I sought out a lawyer and began to make demands to my health insurance company. It, in turn, sent me to several of its own doctors, who found nothing wrong with me. On my own initiative I visited another doctor and his x-ray examination proved that I had bone fractures.

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2 All documents, including passport, health card, and any other identification, must be handed over to the employer upon arrival in Canada and kept until workers return to their home country. Workers must ask permission from their employer to have documents returned if they require them for any reason.
Since I was not following the orders of the consulate, had left my employer’s farm, and instead sought out assistance and support from others, I lost my status as a legal temporary migrant worker. “Me dejaron en la calle.” I presently have no legal status in Canada, and without legal status the consulate will not help me. Unable to gain access to any privileges or rights, I am in limbo. But I am unwilling to give in to defeat. I will stay in Canada and fight my case. While I may be someone without status, which makes everything very difficult, this will not discourage me. I will struggle in the hope that one day my case will be resolved.

While this migrant’s account constitutes a “worst-case scenario,” it is a cautionary tale of what has the potential to transpire when those in power refuse to afford temporary foreign workers with the same rights as citizens of the labour-receiving state. Without proper safeguards, migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitative treatment, requiring assistance of those with access to citizenship rights to improve their conditions.

3 Literally, “They left me in the streets” (English translation).
PART ONE: CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATIONS
Chapter One

Crossing Borders: A Critique of Literature on Economic Migration

Economic migration literature generally focuses on how the expansion of capitalist markets has perpetuated the growth of transmigration. Scholars recognize that international migration is a growing global phenomenon, so much so that it is changing the geography of labour by creating pools of flexible workers that are able to temporarily transcend national borders. The first section of this literature review discusses how mass migration from economically marginalized countries occurs as a direct result of superimposed global economic inequalities, largely examining neomarxist literature on economic migration from Third World nation-states. The second section analyzes the state’s recruitment of temporary migrant workers in Canada and how migrant labour has become an economic necessity. In both sections the main focus of the discussion is on global neoliberal restructuring and the manner in which it has transformed the labour markets of nation-states and is the driving force for economic migration. Before discussing the literature at length, a brief definition of neoliberalism warrants being stated in order to understand the thrust of my critical review of it. Neoliberalism makes reference to the adoption of economic liberalism in the political arena for the advancement of economic growth. Neoliberal policies and practices place emphasis on deregulation, free market forces, and reduction of state intervention (Harvey 2005).

Economic Development in the Third World

The general consensus in the literature reviewed is that economic hardship in labour-export countries has become the leading factor driving the outward flow of migrant labour. Contemporary literature on migration examines how the perpetuating
cycle of transmigration is instigated by external forces that superimpose an economic neoliberal discourse onto peripheral countries that are searching for a means to participate in the competitive global market. Doreen Massey (1988) extends this argument by stating that a common misconception regarding emigration is that it is a product of a lack of economic development in poorer countries. Culpability is often placed solely on the peripheral country, without taking into consideration the superimposed strategies of external actors. In the context of capitalist advancement, economic development is understood to be the use of capital as a means of raising human productivity, creating wealth, and boosting the national income. Poverty in countries that lack economic opportunities drives mass migration to wealthier developed countries that are able to provide employment with higher wages. Massey (1988) goes on to explain how misleading perspectives regarding underdevelopment advance the promotion of neoliberal restructuring for economic development in the sending countries as a way to control immigration in the wealthier receiving countries.

Economic development is currently conceptualized as a process that requires the application of capital as a means of augmenting human productivity. The quandary with the imposition of capital into peasant agricultural production is that, instead of being labour generating, it is labour saving. By investing in technological advancements in an effort to increase agricultural production, the number of workers required will dramatically decline. Consequently, rural areas are negatively impacted by capital investment, thereby perpetuating the process of urbanization (Massey 1988). The neomarxist perspective of the damaging effects of economic development on the subordinate class provides a stronger understanding of the unequal global capitalist development that marginalizes peripheral countries and allows for the advancement of
more affluent countries. In an attempt to restrict immigration, by pushing sending countries to adopt economic neoliberal strategies, receiving countries are in fact facilitating the cycle of transmigration.

**Forces Driving Outward Migration**

According to Nanda Shrestha (1988), neomarxist literature regards migration as a socioeconomic process that is externally re-enforced by structural and material historical forces. This is contrasted to other more conventional models that understand migration to be individually motivated. Neomarxists conceive migration to be influenced by the historical process of capital expansion. Overproduction, the falling rate of profits, and the resulting crisis of capital accumulation have economically hindered many poorer nation-states (Shrestha 1988). Since migration is an economic strategy that offers an escape from the existing structural trap, people are drawn to areas that offer them opportunities for economic advancement. Labour is more readily accessible in areas where spatial accumulation or concentration of capital exists (Shrestha 1988).

Leigh Binford and his associates (2004) argue that sending countries utilize temporary worker contracts as a way to escape the development of a feasible solution that tackles the crisis of landless rural peasants and growing underemployment in rural areas. Bilateral contracts allow labour-export states to adopt a strategy that abandons agricultural reforms that have the potential to create employment opportunities and intensify productivity. Binford and associates (2004) extend their rationale by highlighting how the state’s strategy for reindustrialization allows for the preferential treatment of industrial proletariats and workers, pushing aside the needs of the rural poor and working class.
Instead of effectively administering to the labour needs in their country, Third World states are adhering to the demands of external forces that seek to profit the economic vulnerability of poorer nation-states. Carlos Salas (2005) contends that poorer nation-states are lowering labour standards and wages in their attempts to generate export-oriented employment, advancing their global ‘race to the bottom.’ In order to participate competitively in the global capitalist market, Third World nation-states are forced to cut wages, benefits, working conditions, and the ability to organize. With the poor and working class of economically marginalized countries unable to earn a proper living, many are forced to look elsewhere for economic opportunities (Salas 2005).

Shrestha (1988, 196) argues that this is “an indication of their perceptual or actual realization that they are unable to eke out their subsistence by adapting to the existing social relations of production, or of their inability or unwillingness to revolt against the existing socio-economic order, in their source areas”. As such, neomarxists essentially argue that labour migration is used as a defense mechanism by marginalized societies who have no other viable option.

In opposition to this perspective, the traditional neoclassical economic model assumes that outward migration is simply an individual cost-benefit decision assumed to boost expected income through international movement of labour. The neoclassical model explains that labour movement shifts from low-wage to high-wage countries, while capital (including human capital) flows the opposite way. Migration then places pressure on receiving countries to decrease wages and increase wages in sending countries until equilibrium is realized. In achieving this equilibrium, the international wage gap then becomes equal to the cost of transmigration and net migration will come to an end. Essentially, Massey and Arango et al (1994) argue that neoclassical scholars are under the
assumption that the gap in expected wages will close and eventually there will be no need for transmigration. Neoclassical suppositions on how economic migration is purely voluntary and based largely on individual self interest do not take into account the influence of external actors on labour-exporting countries. This over-generalized discourse supports and permits the continuation of regulatory state control over inward migration and economic marginalization of migrants.

The intensification of economic globalization in the 1970s through industrial restructuring and trade liberalization has produced economic and social conditions that have further exacerbated the gap between the rich and poor. The increased mobility of capital due to the implementation of free-trade agreements and policies of development has allowed for the deepening influence of the globalizing neoliberal discourse in both wealthy and poor countries. Josephine Smart (1997) argues that the mobility of capital has increased and is supporting a bolstering of the flexibilization of production systems and workforce deployment both within and beyond a bound territory. The flexibilization of labour has increased the number of part-time employment and self-employment as well as the number of foreign migrant temporary and seasonal employment (Smart 1997).

Migration to Wealthier Nation-States

International migration is also dictated by demand in the host country, based on the rationale of the existence of a dual labour market economy. Employers need workers who regard the ‘undesirable’, bottom-level jobs as a means to earn capital rather than a

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4 In this context, flexibilization makes reference to the altering work practices of firms that no longer utilize internal labour markets or provide employees with job security. Instead these firms seek out flexible employment relations, characterized as fluid, conditional, and short term, allowing employers to regulate their workforce with more ease.

5 Divides the labour economy into two sectors, known as the primary and secondary sectors and can also be referred to as the formal and informal sectors. Secondary labour involves temporary and low-skilled labour.
status symbol. Casanova and McDaniel (2005) argue that, without permanent standing migrant workers are unable to enhance their status in the host country. Through the creation of a dual labour market, an industry is also able to reduce operating costs and maintain or increase profits. The need to decrease wages and other related costs at the higher level of an industry’s structure are alleviated, by reducing costs at the bottom level. Casanova and McDaniel (2005) go on to explain that working-class jobs that were once part of the primary sector, and were possibly even unionized, have now become secondary jobs that domestic workers are unwilling to undertake and are instead attracting foreign workers. This process was highlighted by Casanova and McDaniel (2005) through a case study on guest workers in Southeastern United States forest industries. In their findings, they came to the conclusion that there is a growing demand for inexpensive and flexible labour, as domestic workers were unwilling to take bottom level jobs that offer minimal possibilities of upward social and economic mobility (Casanova and McDaniel 2005).

Under the new labour market, jobs have become predominantly part-time, low-wage, low-benefit, and unstable, resulting in a deterioration of working conditions. Lean production\(^6\) has created a new dualism in the labour market that is characterized by “the shrinkage in the number of safe, stable, and secure positions, even among white-collar workers” (Basok 2002, 11). Economic migration is closely linked to dual segmentation in the labour market, drawing attention to the regulatory nature of migration. The primary segment is characterized as capital intensive and highly technologically dependent, allowing for an efficient use of the workforce. The secondary segment in turn is characterized as labour intensive, with minimal use or investment in technology.

\(^6\) Assembly-line method of manufacturing.
Bauder acknowledges that the traditional approach to labour market segmentation has its limits, as descriptions of the dual market system are far too homogenous. The secondary segment has a huge range of wages, working conditions, and possibilities for upward mobility (Bauder 2006).

Migrants are generally concentrated in certain jobs such as harvesting, construction, and domestic labour that are at, or near, minimum wage, unstable, and have poorly enforced labour standards. Bauder (2006) argues that the segmentation of the labour market is also a strategy that undermines unity of labour and increases competition between workers. By denying migrant workers basic rights and privileges they become more vulnerable, flexible and competitive than non-migrant workers. Migrant workers are more flexible and less constrained by social responsibilities than non-migrant workers, leaving their families behind in the country they are from and willing to work overtime and on weekends. In response to the low wages they earn, migrant workers will work more hours in an attempt to meet certain monetary targets. The presupposed occupational roles of migrant workers allow for the regulation of a segmented labour market (Bauder 2006). Migrant workers are willing to take on the worst and stigmatized jobs and adapt to changes, while domestic workers resist the economic restructuring measures. A majority of temporary workers take “the socially least regarded jobs, which are the worst paid and least secure,” the ones that nationals are unwilling to take on (Smart 1997, 142). The shift towards the contracting of temporary migrant workers has become a necessary strategy in the face of neoliberal restructuring and the expansion of the competitive global market.
“Unfree” Migrants: An Economic Structural Necessity

Basok argues that the need for foreign workers is not just a preferred and helpful solution for capital; in actuality it has become a structural necessity. Migrant workers differ from other residing immigrants in that the liberal-democratic right of freedom of movement is not extended to them but, rather, only to immigrant residents in the host country. As a result, legal immigrants with landed status cannot be employed as “unfree” labour. While “unfree” labour is inconsistent with the current capitalist mode of production, it is a necessary aspect under certain historic circumstances, especially when the market does not provide labour at a cost that allows for a generation of surplus value. Basok (2002, 14) asserts, to “recruit and retain labour by the use of political and legal compulsion and constraint.” What Basok (2002, 14) is fundamentally arguing, is that “migrants would be a structural necessity only if they were hired as “unfree” labour merely because no other categories of people, be they citizens or immigrants, could be employed under these conditions in a capitalist society.”

With the flexibilization of labour and neoliberal restructuring of the national economy, firms are compelled to contract “unfree” workers in order to survive in the competitive global market. Hugo (2003) extends this discussion on contract migrant labour, explaining that it has reached an unprecedented scale with the increase of labour shortages in countries that are undergoing rapid economic growth. The segmentation of labour in the receiving country has now transformed sectors such as agriculture, forestry, construction and household domestic work into jobs that are now characterized by low income, poor conditions of work and insecurity (Hugo 2003).

In defining “unfree” workers, Basok (2002) not only emphasizes the inability to change jobs, but also brings to light their willingness to provide labour when the need
arises. The fundamental cause of the outward migration of these workers is the economic need that forces many people to seek employment outside of their residing country and accept the exploitative working conditions that are attached to these types of jobs. Unlike free (im)migrant workers, “unfree” workers do not have the option to refuse some of their employer’s demands, even at the risk of losing their job, since the choice of finding another job is not afforded to them as they are bound to a contract and the need to financially support their families back home. Their employer’s control over their visa status, for example, places workers in a state of economic subjugation. Contract labour provides a high degree of predictability, as migrants are bound to their employer by institutions that have the ability to expel disobedient members from the employment program (Basok 2002).

The basis for Basok’s (2002) contention is a case study on temporary agricultural migrant workers in Ontario, Canada. In this study she claims that Ontario produce growers require labour that is cheap and “unfree.” That is, “unfree” to move around in the host labour market, “unfree” to refuse to work as demanded, and lack geographical mobility. Basok (2002, 17) notes that “they stay until their contract expires; they do not take time off work, even when they are exhausted, sick, or injured, because their recruitment into the employment program is rigidly controlled.” As contract workers, migrants have no other feasible option available to them and as a result are willing to accept their “unfree” status and comply with “unfree” labour relations (Basok 2002). As previously explained, economic restructuring of the state incites a reorganization of the labour market that promotes the growth of flexible forms of production and cheap, unskilled, temporary, and part-time labour. This is an economic process that is beneficial
to the labour-receiving country, as the state is able to exploit a labour pool that is willing to comply with these standards of employment.

Shortages should not be defined by the absence of actual workers who are ready and able to work; rather, they should be delineated “by the existence of particular characteristics of the labour supply that impede the process of capital accumulation” (Sharma 2006, 108). This includes “high wage rates, access to social programs, and workers’ protections and their collective bargaining rights” (Sharma 2006, 108). What Sharma is suggesting is that labour shortages should not be based purely on quantitative gaps in the receiving country’s labour market, but should also be defined qualitatively. In reality, labour-receiving countries are experiencing a shortage of cheapened and politically suppressed labour that is filled by “unfree,” contract migrant labour. The recruitment of temporary migrant labour strengthens a company’s competitiveness in the international capitalist market. By tapping into the broad world market for labour and securing workers, industries are able to gain competitive advantage on both the local and global level (Sharma 2006).

The perpetuating cycle of transmigration is fuelled by the neoliberal restructuring of nation-states’ economies that must amend their economy in order to compete in the expanding global capitalist market. The flow of migrants is driven by globalizing forces that attempt to push for economic development through neoliberal strategies. Instead of improving the conditions for the subordinate classes, the liberalization of the globally peripheral markets has created a pool of unstable jobs that do not provide a viable living for the subordinate class. Even in the wealthier receiving countries, migrant workers must take on the undesirable jobs in a dual market labour system, which again has been structured by the same neoliberal strategies that have been superimposed in poorer
countries. Migrant workers are unable to escape the flexible labour market, impeding the possibility for social mobility. Instead of diminishing the growth of transmigration, trade liberalization and export oriented strategies have facilitated the expansion of an “unfree” migrant labour pool. Ultimately, the adoption of neoliberal policies and reforms has intensified economic migration, generating a growing pool of commodified migrants.
Chapter Two

Workers in Limbo: A Critique of Literature on Migrant Status

As non-citizens, temporary migrant workers are denied access to certain rights that are accorded nationals who have a more defined and situated status in labour-importing nations. In this chapter I discuss the correlation between claim to rights and the status of migrant workers, examining the various discourses that rationalize how socio-economic status controls who is privileged enough to have access to an array of citizenship rights. My review of pertinent literature begins with a general discussion of Western concepts of human rights, examining how states utilize citizenship to legitimize the denial of certain rights to migrant workers. This is followed by an examination of how the precarious nature of migrant labour allocates “unfree” status on temporary migrant workers, exacerbating the exploitative conditions in which they find themselves. Even with international safeguards in place for universal protection of all individuals, receiving states refuse to grant migrant workers the same privileges and rights as nationals. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how migrant workers have come to negotiate citizenship to overcome unjust mistreatment, and argues for the need to adopt a “post-national” model to ameliorate present conditions.

Human Rights of Migrants

In her discussion of transmigration, Alison Brysk (2002, 3) explains that human rights “are a set of universal claims to safeguard human dignity from illegitimate coercion, typically enacted by state agents.” Western concepts of human rights are the dominant discourse and defining universal narrative commonly accepted in scholarly literature. The notion of human rights in the global arena also provides a basis for the
examination of rights in relation to transmigration. Although human rights are defined as universally accessible, the receiving state continues to deny migrant workers access to an array of rights on the basis of their non-permanent status. The refusal of these rights has left migrant workers vulnerable to exploitative working and living conditions, given that there are no recognized safeguards that protect their human dignity.

Much theoretical assessment of human rights and migrant workers acknowledges that preconceived notions of citizenship is the defining way of denying migrant workers certain rights and reinforcing the dispossessed status of temporary migrants. The basic right of migrants is to leave any country voluntarily and to return to their own home country when they wish to. Yet, migrant workers have no right to enter another country freely, a direct result of state sovereignty and the receiving state’s ability to decide the conditions of entry. Mattila (2000) contends that the host state is able to legitimize its discriminatory immigration policies on the basis that rights are only inherently available to citizens. Access to rights is now defined by an individual’s status in a nation-state, thereby limiting the rights of migrant workers who are incapacitated by a non-permanent status.

According to Daiva Stasiulis and Abigail Bakan (2005), modern discourse on citizenship promotes values of freedom, democracy, and equality of treatment and is meant to encourage optimism in the protection of an individual’s rights. (Im)migrant policies in receiving countries, however, undermine “the emancipatory potential or equalizing promise of the evasive grail of citizenship” (Stasiulis and Bakan 2005, 11). By criminalizing certain categories of migrants and favouring others, the state is essentially reinforcing a hierarchy of citizenship. The state is able to determine which migrants are acceptable candidates for citizenship, reinforcing the discriminatory exclusion of certain
types of migrants on the basis of class, race, regional, and national origins, linguistic skills, gender, and other classifications. In essence, the importance bestowed on the ideal citizen legitimizes the social and geographical exclusion of migrants. The exclusionary tendencies of immigrant policies are also intensified by the expansion of neoliberal reforms and policies, along with corporate globalization prompted by powerful transnational actors. This, in turn, reinforces the global citizenship divide that exists between citizens of the North and poor migrants of the South (Stasiulus and Bakan 2005).

“Precarious” Labour

Since the inability to gain access to rights in the host country is directly linked to the status of temporary migrants, workers have no other option but to undertake forms of employment that leave them with few protections. Often referred to as “contingent” and non-standard employment within North America, European academics have advanced the use of the term to “precarious” work (Quinlan, Mayhew, and Bohle 2001 and Vosko 2003). While “precarious” employment is a useful term that reflects the social status of temporary migrant workers, it is also limited and hindered by its over-generalized conceptualization of this form of work. According to Vosko (2003), “precarious” work in Canada typically entails anomalous employment contracts, poor working conditions, low wages, and lack of social benefits and/or legal entitlements. Neoliberal reforms and strategies have shaped the current nature of precarious labour as employers hire more temporary and part-time workers and use other strategies in an attempt to minimize labour cost and maximize their profits (Vosko 2003). Kofman and Sales (1998) extend this argument by stating that the civic status and mode of entry of migrants (labour

7 Precarious labour is best characterized as flexible, exploitative, temporary, part-time, or freelance employment. This term refers to non-permanent work with no guarantee of job security.
migration and political asylum, for example) shapes their economic and political exclusion. In the case of seasonal agricultural workers of Canada, temporary migration programs offer few protections because of the precarious nature of the program.

Those taking on “precarious” work, in the eyes of Quinlan, Mayhew, and Bohle (2001, 350) are usually under “greater economic pressure in terms of competition for jobs or contracts, pressure to retain a job, and pressure to earn a livable income.” Contract systems such as the SAWP and FWP encourage underbidding on employment opportunities, especially when limited qualifications are required to enter the industry and the labour market is inundated by a readily available pool of workers. According to Quinlain, Mayhew, and Bohle (2001), the precarious nature of the work is also due to ignorance of worker entitlement and fear on the part of migrants that making claims over rights will threaten their job. Ghosh (2003) contributes to this discussion by bringing to light the fact that migrant workers are not fully informed of their entitlements in the receiving country. As outsiders, precarious workers have very limited options made available to them, leaving them in a vulnerable position for exploitation.

Defining someone’s status as “precarious” is problematical, and reflects the weakness of an over-generalized concept. While it may encapsulate relevant labour market changes, there are far better terms that describe the socio-economic status of temporary migrant workers. Given that there are “precarious” workers who are not limited by non-citizenship status. The fact remains, however, that temporary migrants with precarious status are an ideal reserve of flexible labour that can be employed in more undesirable jobs because of the lack of options and opportunities made available to them.
“Unfree” Labour

A more relevant term that defines the socio-economic status of temporary migrant workers, one previously discussed in the literature review on the economics of migration, is that of the “unfree” worker. While “unfree” work is also associated with indentured and forced labour, temporary migrant workers can easily be categorized under this model. Temporary agricultural migrant workers are constrained by their “unfree” status in Canada, bound by contract. This form of bonded labour constrains the social and geographical mobility of migrant workers and is largely defined by the lack of political-legal rights that limit a worker’s influence in the labour market (Basok 1999).

Though “unfree” status is usually associated with slavery and debt servitude, such an exclusive focus disregards the economic repression that marginalized groups experience both in the countries they leave and the ones in which they arrive to sell their labour. Without access to opportunities to work for a decent wage in their home countries, many people are forced to migrate in search of better prospects. In receiving countries, migrants must then unwillingly accept the constraints of seasonal labour, unable to temper the demands of employers and seek out other forms of employment. Given that migrant workers have few feasible options in their home country and need to support their families somehow, they must then sign up for unstable and non-permanent labour to earn an income. While such economic bondage leaves migrants vulnerable to exploitation, financial constraints back home bind them to all kinds of work that nationals are unwilling to take on. Neoliberal reconfiguration of the global labour market places much greater limits on the individual choices open to migrants, leaving them little viable alternative then to assume “unfree” work.
Capitalist discourse on labour holds migrant workers to be free individuals who are able to openly manage their labour power as a commodity. Basok (1999) counters this claim by arguing that, after migrants enter a host country they are bound by social and geographical constraints that are attached to their social standing, imposed by the host society. This inescapable social status limits the labour market mobility and bargaining power of migrant workers, given that the state and employers are granted excessive control over temporary migrants’ labour. Unable to escape the status imposed on them, migrant workers have no option but to accept the inability to gain access to certain rights when entering the receiving country.

**The Struggle to Protect Migrants**

Safeguards established at the international level theoretically transcend all borders and are made available to all migrants regardless of their socio-economic status, thereby protecting workers from inhumane treatment. Nonetheless, these international safeguards encounter difficulties in being recognized and enforced at the national level. Refugees are granted protective measures in receiving countries; however, no such instrument exists for migrants who are required to leave their home country in response to violations of economic, social and/or cultural rights. According to Taran (2000), the need to protect victims from these violations goes unacknowledged. This tension at the international and national level creates conflict for migrant workers, denying them access and claims to rights, thereby reinforcing human rights violations.

A basic document that outlines modern international human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, established with the objective of non-discriminatory protection of all human beings. The International Labour Organization, established for the benefit of migrants, initiated international labour standards that work towards the
equitable treatment of both national and non-nationals. The most notable international mechanism that focuses on the rights of migrants is the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, implemented by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990. The purpose of this instrument is to restate and reaffirm the basic human rights of migrants. The convention has yet to enter into force in Canada. Once again, the applicability of this instrument is called into question, as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights legislation that is in place, is difficult to put into practice, especially when it comes to protecting the rights of non-nationals in a state (Mattila 2000). While the applicability of international human rights is questionable, the existence and need for individual rights is nonetheless undeniable. It is the state’s responsibility to protect and implement ‘universal’ human rights. Mattila (2000) notes that one of the basic institutional obstacles to the application of international human rights to migrant workers is that nation-states are unwilling to extend the international human rights standards that have been incorporated in their domestic legal systems to non-citizens.

Stasiulis and Bakan (2005) argue that migrant workers seek to attain formal citizenship in wealthier countries, given that this status affords them democratic rights and the prospect of a better life. More importantly, it allows migrants to overcome the exploitation that stems from their temporary status in the receiving country. Since a worker’s vulnerability is aggravated by inability to gain membership into the citizen club, migrants are forced to ascertain ways to negotiate access to an array of rights exclusive to citizens. For Third World migrants in wealthier countries, the shift from non-citizen to citizen requires a complex navigation of different legal, institutional, financial, and
ideological obstacles that are erected by gatekeepers⁸ in the receiving country. According to Stasiulis and Bakan (2005, 140), “recent critical scholarship on citizenship has tended to neglect the centrality of these gatekeepers in regulating access to formal, juridical citizenship, based on the argument that democratic rights are purely formal in the face of massive social inequalities.” The influence that gatekeepers hold over access to citizenship rights is a hindering challenge that migrant workers must surmount to improve their working and living conditions.

In finding effective negotiating strategies to confront the restrictive access of citizenship rights, migrant workers also turn to civil society⁹ to ensure that the receiving state is complying with international conventions. Ball and Piper (2002) contend that once civil society has lobbied to the labour-receiving state for ratification, support groups should still continue to play a major role in organizing public hearings and promoting political and public debate, ensuring mainstream acknowledgement of a crisis that is in dire need of change.

The flexibility of the labour market and the temporary status of migrant workers provide the receiving state with a substantial regulatory effectiveness, allowing the government to repatriate temporary migrants with ease. The lack of judiciary rights leaves migrant workers unprotected and subject to unfair treatment. Ball and Piper (2002) maintain a migrant worker’s vulnerability is largely structurally developed and as such gatekeepers are not solely to blame; they base their assertion on their extensive case study of Philippine migrant workers in Japan. With limited influence and command of

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⁸ These actors include policy makers and legislators in the sending and receiving country, immigrant personnel, and recruitment agency personnel, who are involved in controlling the stipulations of entry of migrant workers in wealthier countries. It should be noted that gatekeepers have a strong influence over policy changes that affect the citizenship rights afforded only to nationals.

⁹ Individuals or groups with citizenship status in the receiving country and that are willing to offer support and assistance to migrant workers.
their own state of affairs, migrant workers are often regarded as “pawns in diplomatic inter-state games” (Ball and Piper 2002, 1018). The labour-export state will also often take on a stance of non-intervention in the host country’s affairs as a justification to avoid assuming responsibility over their citizens (Ball and Piper 2002).

Given that host state legislation favours citizens over non-citizens, migrant workers are unable to navigate legal channels without effective support. In addition, poorer migrants lack the economic capital to negotiate the same flexible terms of entry and rights that wealthier migrants are able to access (Stasiulis and Bakan 2005). Therefore, temporary migrants require the assistance and support of those with access to and knowledge of the legal system in the receiving country. Stasiulis and Bakan (2005) extend this argument by taking into account how engaging in dissidence can jeopardize the short-term legal status of migrant workers and the opportunity of being granted citizenship status. Civil society has the potential to improve the conditions of migrant workers and to support them in the struggle for acceptance into the host society. When the state is not implementing progressive policies, Ball and Piper (2002) contend that civil society is often required to step up and pressure the state for change.

Citizenship, much like the mainstream discourse on human rights, is historically and culturally specific to Western society. It originated from classical concepts concerning democratic participation in the polis and, according to Turner (1993, 496), is currently developed “as a critique of the consequences of monetaristic restructuring of the welfare system.” Although citizenship can be used as a means to offset the negative effects of class inequality in the global capitalist market, it has instead been manipulated by the state to legitimize their denial of rights to migrants.
Modern conceptualization of citizenship is challenged by the “complex and multifaceted relationship of individuals to territories, nation-states, labour markets, communities and household,” engendered by international migration (Stasiulis and Bakan 2005, 11). Contestation of citizenship poses the need for the re-conceptualization of membership in a nation-state, so as to ensure that migrants are provided with the opportunity to escape the exploitative conditions generated by their non-permanent status. Stasiulis and Bakan (2005) suggest that post-national citizenship\(^\text{10}\) is the just and humane solution to the conflict of transmigration and neoliberal reformation of the labour market. Basok (2004), Bhabha (1999), and Brsyk (2002) also support the universal adoption of post-national citizenship, as an approach to the discontinuation of the unjust mistreatment of migrant workers. The promotion of post-national rights does not have to signify a deterioration of the nation-state and an erosion of the rights of ‘legitimate’ citizens of the nation-state, as Tambini (2001) and Jacobson (1996) would argue. Instead, it can entail the mere extension of rights to migrant workers who are in need of access to these rights to ensure their protection from exploitation and marginalization.

It is not enough to question the lack of rights granted to migrant workers. Feasible solutions must also be formulated and examined for the enhancement of the status of migrant workers and the often exploitative conditions that they are forced to endure. Brysk (2002) argues that the same system that was developed to defend and improve the rights of citizens within a nation-state must also recognize that non citizens should also have claim to the same rights. If post-national citizenship rights are to be developed and promoted, then accountability becomes of prime concern. Brysk (2002, 255-256)

\(^{10}\) According to the post-national citizenship model, the boundaries of membership are fluid and allow migrant workers to be citizens of one state and granted access to rights and privileges in another state. Essentially, individuals have claim to universal status according them a diversity of rights.
contends that “transnational campaigns for greater accountability should balance policymaking insiders with grassroots outsiders and provide both positive incentives and negative sanctions . . . mechanisms for global rights depend on broadening representation, fostering transparency, providing and accessing multiple venues, and building common foundational norms.” The existing citizenship gap can only be closed by attaching global governance to various streams of globalization and types of states (Brysk 2002).

Essentially, global governance over this citizenship gap entails three features. First, the formulation of new venues and forms of participation to broaden accountability for new subjects and to deal with ignored and unrecognized world issues in the existing system. Second, those actors deemed not to belong must be provided with space in existing institutions and influence in state structures. And third, a relationship between classic notions of citizenship and novel forms of global community needs to be generated (Brysk 2004). By addressing this citizenship gap, migrant workers can be provided with a greater control over their status and more protection from human right violations.

The promotion of post-national notions of rights and the reconstruction of the accountability of supranational human rights will foster positive development of the living and working conditions and marginalized status of migrant workers. The promotion of human rights discourse in the global arena will ensure the development and advancement of rights that are often denied at the national level, especially for those deemed to be ‘outsiders’ of the labour-receiving nation-state. In essence, migrants must be afforded the opportunity to shed the “unfree” status that currently plagues them. The non-permanent status of migrants should not be the basis for negating them access to certain rights nor is it a legitimate justification for the inappropriate treatment of seasonal farm workers.
Chapter Three

Southern Hands in Northern Fields: The Place of Migrant Workers in Quebec

Migration is a growing global phenomenon, with a variety of factors propelling the transnational movement of people. Outward economic migration from “Third World” countries Shrestha (1988, 189) believes is generated in response to “the social and spatial arrangement and rearrangements of the national economy.” Even though the state plays a pivotal role in the distribution of capital in “Third World” countries, there is still an uneven distribution of resources amongst the public, driving large portions of the population outward to seek capital and labour in richer nation-states. Uneven geographical development, within “Third World” countries and globally, is the prime motivating factor for economic migration (Shrestha 1988).

In the case of Mexico and Guatemala, there have been varying motivations for the transmigration of their populations (See Figure 3.1). To gain a fuller understanding of the phenomenon socio-economic conditions in both countries requires closer examination. While Mexico and Guatemala share similar stories of pressure from external forces to adhere to changes in the global capital market, Mexico does not endure the same intense level of poverty and economic-political instability as Guatemala. Mexico’s case is also unique in that, along with Canada and the United States, it forms part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).
Previous outward migration from Guatemala was driven by the political instability brought on by a civil war between the government and left-wing guerillas. From the 1960s up until 1996, when a ‘firm and lasting’ Peace Accord was signed, over 400,000 Guatemalans fled the repressive military dictatorships and violent conflicts that plagued the country. Between 1982 and 1987, a period when violence in Guatemala was at its peak, Canada granted entry to approximately 16,000 refugee applicants, which represented a relatively small portion of the total number migrants fleeing the country.
The majority of Guatemalans sought refuge in Mexico and the United States (Smith 2006).

Popkin (2003) maintains that the collapse of the agricultural sector, which can be attributed to government neglect in rural areas and a series of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes, has kept levels of poverty and unemployment in Guatemala markedly high. Between 1970 and 1987 a notable decline in agricultural productivity was recorded (Smith 2006). These tribulations have occurred in an economy where more than thirty percent of the population is employed by the agricultural sector (Popkin 2003). Moreover, since 1999 the consequences of civil war have also left approximately forty percent of the population underemployed. Guatemala has seen a steady net increase of outward migration on the part of its citizens, who come from various socio-economic backgrounds (Smith 2006).

Popkin (2003) also argues that the devastating effects of the civil war in Guatemala have forced the state to implement neoliberal policies, in an attempt to enact large scale reconstruction efforts. These policies adhere to the neoliberal discourse on the advancement of free trade and an unequal capitalist market. Like many other Latin American countries, Guatemala has succumbed to mounting pressure from external forces, such as the World Bank, IMF, transnational corporations, and First World priorities, to adopt neoliberal reforms and strategies. With the liberalization of global markets, Guatemala has no other feasible option but to implement an export-oriented economy and to privatize elements of its social sector. Agricultural production for export and the modernization of production has further marginalized the role of rural peasants, who are amongst the poorest people of Guatemala (Smith 2006).
Other factors that contribute to the high levels of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty include (1) land inequalities in rural areas; (2) ethnic discrimination against indigenous populations; and (3) labour exploitation, all three of which predate decades of civil war. While most Latin American countries endure similar conflicts and iniquities, Krzinaric (2005) argues that Guatemala has been more adversely affected than any other country in the region.

Guatemala’s socio-economic conditions are amongst the worst in Latin America. According to the 2006 United Nations Human Development Index, Guatemala is currently ranked 118 out of 177 countries (UNDP 2006). In addition, approximately fifty percent of the population falls below the national poverty line (UNDP 2006). The Mayan population of Guatemala endures the worst economic conditions, making up 58% of the poor and 72% of the extreme poor in 2003 (World Bank 2003). Outward economic migration provides an escape from the socio-economic hardships entrenched in Guatemala, offering migrants new socio-economic opportunities.

While Mexico does not have such a high levels of poverty as Guatemala, it still faces many similar adverse situations, including a government agenda that adheres to superimposed hegemonic neoliberal discourse. In terms of its overall socio-economic status, Mexico fares far better than Guatemala, with approximately twenty percent of the population falling below the national poverty line. According to the 2006 United Nations Human Development Index, Mexico is presently ranked 53 out of 177 countries (UNDP 2006).

With approximately 11 million of its citizens living abroad in 2006, Mexico has one of the world’s largest net populations emigrating from the country (Escobar, Hailbronner, et al 2006). According to Escobar, Hailbronner et al (2006), international
migration is largely driven by the growing levels of poverty and inequality, stemming from the adoption of neoliberal policies and liberalization of the national market. During the 1980s the Mexican government began to adopt economic liberalization and export-driven industrialization policies as a way of dealing with the economic crisis that afflicted the country. In combination with neoliberal strategies, the Mexican government lowered labour standards, leaving many members of the working class unable to find a decent job. As a result, migration from all across Mexico dramatically increased as people sought capital and labour outside of the country (Binford 2005).

President Carlos Salinas de Gortari campaigned in favour of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with the intention of curbing migration to the north and creating job opportunities through the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment and the predicted positive trade effects of NAFTA. Since 1994, precisely the opposite has occurred, with stagnation in real wages and a decrease in employment opportunities. In adopting export-oriented policies, Mexican government officials have allowed their decisions to be controlled by foreign investors and external markets. Mexico has joined many other countries across the world in the global “race to the bottom,” altering labour standards that benefit, for the most part, large businesses (Salas 2005).

As Latin America’s number one exporter and thirteenth worldwide, Mexico’s economy heavily relies on the export of manufactured goods. Its export-oriented model is structured around a maquila sector\(^{11}\) that emphasizes low wages and proximity to import and export markets. The fact is, however, that net profits do not remain in Mexico and

\(^{11}\) Salas (2005, 23-24) writes: “Maquiladoras assemble final products from intermediate goods typically produced abroad. The vast majority of maquila input (the cloth of apparel manufacturing) come from outside the country . . . And the vast majority of maquila output are destined for export . . . Maquila regulations allow for the unlimited participation of foreign capital in Mexico-based facilities.”
the jobs that are created by maquila initiatives are massively subsidized, placing an even greater strain on the national economy (Wise 2006). While the maquila sector peaked in 2000, it has been declining ever since, as large corporations take their business to countries with even cheaper labour markets and lower production-costs than Mexico, thereby taking away the low-wage jobs (Salas 2005).

**Temporary Foreign Worker Programs in Canada**

The Mexican and Guatemalan governments realize that they cannot provide employment opportunities to all their citizens. As a result, they depend on richer countries to employ some of them. The Foreign Worker Program (FWP) and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) are initiatives established by the Canadian government that allow firms to recruit temporary migrant workers. The growing need to seek labour and capital in Canada has forced many Mexicans and Guatemalans to take on work that offers temporary solutions, not secure and steady employment.

There has been a growing demand for unskilled, cheap, and flexible workers in Canada, given the unwillingness of local nationals to take on unstable, low-paying jobs. In response to the mounting pressure from local farmers, the Canadian government was forced to adopt the Caribbean Seasonal Workers program in 1966, initially contracting seasonal workers from Jamaica to fill in the void of agricultural labour on Ontario farms. The program was expanded in 1967 to include Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Grenada and, nine years later, Antigua, Dominica, St Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla, St Lucia, St Vincent, and Monserrat. In 1974, the Canadian government also negotiated a contract with Mexico (Knowles 1997). Today, Mexicans are the largest number of seasonal agricultural workers contracted in all of Canada, many of them based temporarily in Quebec. According to statistics provided by the Mexican consulate in Montreal, between
1974 and 2005 134,518 Mexicans entered Canada through SAWP. In 2005, Canada received 11,720 Mexicans through SAWP with 2280 of them traveling to Quebec. In 2006, this number rose to 3011 in the province of Quebec (Cosio Durán October 23, 2006).

Bauder (2006, 157) argues that SAWP was implemented to benefit the Canadian agricultural industry and provide a “disciplined and flexible labour at the lowest possible cost to the Canadian growers.” Essentially, the program is not concerned with the welfare of the sending country or the needs of seasonal workers. Bauder (2006) insists that while the receiving country benefits far more than the labour-supplying country, administrators of the programs claim that their main goal is nevertheless to ensure economic prosperity for both Canada and migrant workers. SAWP is administered by Fondation des entreprises pour le recrutement de la main-d'œuvre étrangère (FERME) in Quebec and New Brunswick, which is the francophone counterpart to the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Service (FARMS), responsible for the rest of Canada. FERME and FARMS are private, non-profit organizations comprised of a board of directors that represent the various farmers contracting workers in the program (Bauder 2006).

Under the SAWP, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is established between Canada and the sending countries at the intergovernmental level. The MOU requires participating countries to acknowledge the objectives of the program, the steps involved, and the role of the participants. By formalizing matters in such a fashion, the Canadian government is able to safeguard itself from exploitative practices associated with private labour contractors and illegal migration (Brem 2006).

Human Resource and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) is the federal body of authority over the SAWP. Farmers seeking to contract foreign workers through the
program must first obtain approval from their local HRSDC Human Resource Centre. Farmers must prove to the HRSDC that they are unable to hire Canadian workers, in keeping with the “Canadian’s First” policy. Once farmers have proven that they are unable to find a sufficient number of national workers, their application is then turned over to FERME or FARMS. In 1987, HRSDC handed over the administrative responsibilities of the SAWP to this non-profit, non-governmental organization. FARMS and FERME are responsible for contacting the sending country’s government, which then recruits the migrant workers for the program. Once a worker has been recruited by the labour-supplying country, their documents, including medical clearance and passport, must be presented to a Canadian immigration office, so that he/she may obtain a work permit (Brem 2006).

The labour-supply country is required to maintain a pool of workers ready to be sent upon request (Brem 2006). Research participants explained that in order to apply to join the program, they often have to travel some distance to larger cities, where they wait long hours at the recruitment offices in the hopes of being accepted in the program. Caribbean and Mexican workers have two different employment agreements, both of which are broadly similar. One difference between them is that, under the Mexican agreement, the sending-country’s government officials sign the employment agreement, instead of the workers themselves (HRSDC 2006).

The employment agreement goes into extensive detail on the rights and obligations of all parties involved in the program. According to the agreement, employers are obliged to provide employment for no less than 240 hours in a term of 6

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12 It should be noted that all that is required of an employer in order to prove that they are unable to find local workers is to have an advertisement in the local paper for a few weeks, after which they are able to apply to hire offshore workers through the program.
weeks or less and no longer than 8 months with a 14-day trial period at the beginning of their employment. Workers must be given acceptable accommodation free of charge. It is also an employer’s responsibility to ensure that workers have access to provincial health coverage and that migrants are also enrolled in the provincial workplace safety insurance program. The workers are obligated to pay $450 toward their transportation costs and $150 for the work permit processing fee. The agreement also goes into extensive details on the responsibilities and obligations of all parties with respect to such issues as repatriation, wages, maintenance of work records, and other miscellaneous articles (HRSDC 2006).

The pilot FWP was established in 2002 as a means of recruiting low and medium-skilled workers. The FWP does not require bilateral agreements between Canada and the labour-sending states to contract migrant workers temporarily. Instead, companies can recruit temporary migrants from any country without bilateral agreements limiting the selection process. While the program was initially introduced by HRSDC to fill demands in Canada’s meat, construction and tourism industries, in 2003 FERME was also able to obtain permits for Guatemalans to work on farms in Quebec. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was involved in the initial phase of the program, aiding in the recruitment of workers from Guatemala (Brem 2005). Currently, Quebec is the only province in Canada to recruit Guatemalans to work in the agricultural sector; however, this could change significantly in a few years with the growing popularity of the FWP.

According to Senor Emmanuel Herrera, from the Guatemalan consulate in Montreal, in 2003, the first year that Guatemalans were granted temporary work visas, 215 migrants were recruited to work on various farms across Quebec. The following year
the demand for Guatemalans increased with 320 migrant workers arriving. In 2005 this number doubled to 675. At the last count in 2006, the Guatemalan temporary worker population rose considerably to 1207. By 2007, the number is expected to nearly triple, making it evermore urgent to examine this new phenomenon (Emmanuel Herrera Nov 14, 2006). In short, Señor Herrera anticipates a ten fold increase in Guatemalan labour in a period of five years.

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2006), the number of temporary workers recruited through the FWP in the country has grown from 134,251 in 2004, to 151,720 in 2005, and is expected to continue to rise over the coming years. Under the FWP, workers were previously only permitted to work up to twelve months in Canada and then reapply to the program after four months. Recent changes implemented by HRSDC and Citizenship and Immigration now allow temporary migrants to stay up to twenty-four months without having to request an extension. The FWP does not require workers to pay transportation costs; however, they are obligated to pay employers accommodation costs. If employers wish to contract a Guatemalan worker under the FWP, as with the SAWP, they must first apply to the HRSDC. The one difference is that employers are also required to apply to the Ministère de l'Immigration et Communautés culturelles (MICC) for the Quebec Certificate of Acceptance (QAC). The Guatemalan government is responsible for recruiting workers and for obtaining work permits from the Canadian immigration office (HRSDC 2006).

Another important aspect to note regarding the FWP is that if migrant workers are repatriated to their home country or the employer recommends that a worker not return the following year, these individuals will then be excluded from the program. If under the SAWP, a migrant were to be repatriated, that same worker still has the opportunity to
return and can be employed on another farm (HRSDC 2006). The convergence between the FWP and SAWP has the potential to permit excessive exploitation, under the current competitive drive of the global market. With fewer safeguards, the FWP places unwieldy restrictions on migrant workers, exposing them to living and working conditions that pose a considerable challenge.

**Migrant Claims to Rights**

The rights of workers under the FWP and the SAWP is a contentious issue that requires thorough examination, in order to understand better the challenges and struggles that migrants face in gaining access to these rights. At the international level, the key instrument focusing on the protection of migrant rights is the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which was implemented by the United Nation in 1990. This document attempts to grant all migrants equal rights, even those who are undocumented, entitling them all to the same basic human rights (Mattila 2000). It was not until July 1, 2003 that this international convention entered into force. Canada, however, is not among the countries that have agreed to ratify the convention (Brem 2006).

While Canada has not signed the United Nations Convention on Migrant Rights, there are still components of the SAWP that adhere to international standards to protect the rights of all migrant workers. This includes a right to a minimum wage, though Quebec is an exception, worker’s compensation, and access to medical care. At the same time, there are key areas that the SAWP has not implemented, including the right to unionize and the implementation of effective enforcement mechanisms. In addition, mobility rights are constrained and support groups receive no formal recognition (Brem 2005).
Contracts signed by all parties stipulate that migrants are to receive the same treatment as other Canadian agricultural workers. While the SAWP and FWP are federal programs, the provincial government legislates the employment rights of migrant workers, along with employment standards, workplace health, and safety laws; furthermore, it defines health standards for the worker’s housing. In Quebec, three provincial ministries are involved in setting up arrangements: (1) the Ministry of Labour; (2) the Ministry of Health and Social Services; and (2) the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (HRSDC 2006). In Quebec, agricultural workers are excluded from the legislation that regulates minimum wage for all workers, allowing farmers to regulate the wages of their employees. Nevertheless, the agricultural sector in Quebec has set standards on minimum wage and working conditions (Simrad and Mimeault 2001).

Section 15 of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms states categorically that, “every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination . . . on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability . . . or on the basis of characteristics analogous\textsuperscript{13} to those” (Commission for Labour Cooperation 2002, 10). The Supreme Court of Canada maintains that non-citizenship relates to an analogous group entitled to equality rights under the Charter; however, Canadian courts have also found that the government is allowed to control access to social benefits and residency within their jurisdiction while ensuring that they do not breach section 15 (Commission of Labour Cooperation 2002).

\textsuperscript{13} The Text also states: “‘Analogous’ characteristics tend to be those defining groups of persons that history and experience show to have been the subject of stereotypes that deny individual human dignity, as opposed to those relating to individual capacity, worth or circumstances” (Commission for Labour Cooperation 10, 2002).
There are no formal mechanisms established to ensure that the stipulations in the employment agreement are followed, ensuring that all parties involved respect the rights and obligations of the agreement. Without a formal method or grievance process to address disputes, workers must rely on their consulate representatives to enforce the provisions of the employment agreements. The working conditions of migrants are overseen by representatives of the sending country; in the case of Guatemala and Mexico, consulate representatives monitor these conditions. This involves investigating disputes; ensuring that migrants are fairly paid and provided with proper housing; and offering policy suggestions to the HRSDC (Brem 2005). Labour-sending government representatives have no formal role in the FWP; the same level of government supervision does not exist as under the SAWP. In his study for the North-South Institute, Brem (2005) understands that fewer safeguards allow for the further exploitation of the workers under this new program.

The Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA), a Quebec provincial government farmer’s organization, is subcontracted by HRSDC to provide assistance to workers while they are in Canada (Brem 2005). Representatives of Union des Producteurs Agricoles in St. Rémi, however, told me during my field research that they are only involved in the recruitment process and have no direct contact with migrant workers, only Canadian agricultural workers. While migrant workers have certain defined rights, they still face great barriers in gaining access to these rights, such as language constraints, lack of knowledge, and most importantly, lack of assistance from support groups.
Farming in Quebec

An examination of the agricultural sector in Quebec provides better insight into the importance of farming in the province and explains the growing demand for migrant agricultural workers. According to the 2001 Census of Agriculture, thirteen percent of Canadian farms are located in Quebec. With a total number of 32,139 census farms, this represents a 10.7% decline from the previous five years. The majority of farms in Quebec are concentrated in the southern regions of the province, where most migrant workers are employed. The Montérégie region, where St. Rémi is located (See Appendix 1), has the highest proportion of Quebec farms (24%) with a total number of 7,551, but this figure has dropped 12.4% since 1996 (STATCAN 2002). In 2001, Quebec agricultural production accounted for 42% of crop receipts in Canada (STATCAN 2002).

Historically, the majority of migrant agricultural labour in Quebec after the Second World War consisted of European immigrants who acquired farming skills on family farms in their home country. These European immigrants established their own family farms in Quebec and at the same time helped to populate isolated rural areas in Quebec. Most farms during this period were small-scale family farms and family members would take on the majority of the work (Simrad 1995).

The current demography of agricultural labourers is dramatically shifting with the growing number of migrant agricultural workers contracted into the province. Quebec has the second-largest number of migrant agricultural workers in Canada, with approximately 4,000 migrants recruited in 2006. Quebec manifestly depends on migrant labour in order to maintain its vital agricultural sector (Brem 2005).

While the total number of farms in Quebec has decreased, the size of the average farm in turn has increased, from 194 acres in 1981 to 263 acres in 2001. In 2001, the
average size of a farm in Montérégie was 233 acres, with 1.8 millions acres of total farm area (STATCAN 2002). According to l’Union des producteurs agricoles, the region currently has approximately 3,100 farms; much of the farm revenue generated comes from plant crops (UPA 2007). The changing geographical patterns of farms in Quebec indicate a shift away from small-scale family farms toward larger agri-businesses that generally seek to acquire cheap and reliable labour to advance in the global competitive market.
PART TWO: EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS
Chapter Four

Engaging the Issues

My interest in migrant agricultural workers in Canada was sparked by the lack of literature readily available on the issue, motivating me to construct a research project focused on the subject. I initially intended to conduct a study on Mexican migrant workers in Ontario; however, after pursuing the matter further, I came to the realization that very little research investigated the presence of migrant workers in Quebec. With Guatemalans newly introduced into the province as temporary migrant workers, I felt it would be most effective to delve into an issue that had yet to be studied.

By examining Guatemalan and Mexican migrant workers in Quebec, I hope to shift away from previous studies and analyze a new convergence in the Canadian labour market. More importantly, one of the main goals of my research is to voice the concerns of migrant workers who face a variety of barriers, engendering a certain degree of fear amongst them. Too often the voices of marginalized groups go unheard. One of my main priorities is to document the situation of seasonal migrant workers, which resonates across all provinces. At the same time, I wish to draw attention to the contributions that temporary migrant workers make to the Canadian economy and to agricultural production specifically.

Before entering the field I thought a lot about how to establish a degree of trust with migrant workers so as not to enter the community as a complete outsider. It was important to me that I find a way to integrate myself into the community of temporary migrant workers in St. Rémi. Since “support systems” are a central focus in my study, I got in contact with a group that had already cultivated a strong relationship with migrant
workers in Quebec. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Union/Travailleuses unis de l’alimentation et du commerce (TUAC) in Quebec, is an organization that provides extensive support and assistance to migrant agricultural workers.

I set up a meeting with Ontario UFCW representative, Stan Raper, who is the national coordinator for the UFCW’s agricultural workers program. Raper then put me in touch with the Migrant Agricultural Worker Support centre in St. Rémi, Quebec. Through the Support Centre I was able to meet and build a rapport with UFCW employees and migrant agricultural workers in St. Rémi themselves. The staff of the Support Centre in particular enlightened me on the complexity of the issues at hand, providing me with considerable insight into the plight of migrant workers.

Into the Field

I decided to focus my study on Mexican and Guatemalan migrant workers, since Mexicans are currently outnumbering the number of Jamaicans entering Canada through the program. Guatemalans migrants, in turn, are a newly added dimension to the complex Canadian labour market. I felt that being Hispanic/Latina myself would provide me with an advantage that other researchers may not enjoy when studying such a marginalized group. As a fluent native speaker of Spanish, the use of this language as a lingua franca was crucial to the fieldwork experience.

My preliminary research began by getting in contact with different support groups for migrant agricultural workers, including Justicia (a grass roots organization) and the

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14 As the agricultural coordinator of the UFCW, he is responsible for coordinating the various Migrant Support Centres in Ontario and Quebec. Stan Raper also actively involved in enhancing the working conditions and rights of migrant farm workers by lobbying to the Canadian government and speaking at public fora.
UFCW. Furthermore, I attended a National Migrant Justice Gathering in June 2006, which highlighted some of the pertinent issues affecting the precarious status of migrant workers across Canada. Attending this meeting helped me to formulate research questions that would need to be investigated throughout my research both through interviews and field observation.

In July 2006, I began to travel to St. Rémi, Quebec, to meet with the local UFCW Support Centre who worked out of a small trailer. The staff members guided me around St. Rémi and introduced me to various migrant agricultural workers whom they had got to know over the years. I thought it best to begin my research with field observation in St. Rémi, mapping out the landscape of the area and studying the relationship between the migrant workers, local community and Support Centre. I carried a journal with me in St. Rémi, recording field notes and reflections on my daily observations, as I believe that ‘external memory’\(^{15}\) allows a researcher to effectively record daily observations. Altrichter and Holly (2005) argue that introspective diaries can lead to important insights. Field observations were continuously utilized throughout my research even while conducting interviews with various participants. I found this to be a valuable tool for gathering accounts on how migrant workers have transformed the landscape in St. Rémi and are ineffectively afforded support.

Aside from field observations, interviews were another critical component of my field research. There were a variety of methods that I utilized to interview participants, as I felt that it would be more effective to my study to bring an array of approaches, which would allow for a range of data to be gathered. With migrant workers I conducted

\(^{15}\) This includes diaries, log books, journals, field notes or lab book and allows researchers to record their daily observations.
both extensive personal and focus group interviews, with no more than three participants at a time (See Appendix 2). While focus groups present more challenges to the researcher than personal interviews, such as “piggybacking”\footnote{Makes reference to an issue that arises in group interviews when one research participant’s response to questions is shaped by another participant’s response to the same question. ‘Piggybacking’ does not allow the researcher to collect uninfluenced opinions.} and the influence of gatekeepers,\footnote{A gatekeeper will help the researcher get in contact with research participants and as the main link to participants they have control over the flow of knowledge and information.} I found both methods to be effective approaches to gaining insight into the group dynamics\footnote{Makes reference to research participants who may try to play to an audience or are unsettled in a focus group and hesitant to speak.} amongst workers and many seemed to open up more in focus groups (Barbour and Schostak 2005). In total I interviewed fifteen migrant workers, fourteen of whom are Mexicans and one who is Guatemalan. All interviews with migrant workers were conducted during the worker’s time off in the evenings or on weekends, never on the farms on which they worked. 

The three main “support systems” in Quebec that have the most contact with migrant workers are the UFCW Support Centre, the Mexican and Guatemalan consulates, and FERME (See Appendix 3, 4 & 5). These three groups needed to be interviewed, in order to study what type of support is being provided to migrant workers. With the three Support Centre staff members I conducted extensive personal interviews. I found it most effective to just allow the staff to talk about their own personal experiences with the workers and to note some of the difficulties migrant workers encounter in Quebec. A representative of the Mexican consulate agreed to an extensive telephone interview, while the Guatemalan consulate was only willing to answer questions via email. René Mantha, the FERME General Manager, also answered questions via email.
As a way of studying the impact that migrant workers have on the community and understanding how they are viewed in Quebec, the opinions of a farmer and local community members were gathered. After numerous calls to various farmers in St. Rémi and the surrounding area, I was able to find one farmer willing to answer questions via email (See Appendix 6). While I would have preferred to have more farmers involved, it was difficult to find willing participants. I conducted short interviews with ten random community members in St. Rémi, largely interviewing them in the small stores where they work in or near St. Rémi (See Appendix 7). During these interviews, my sister, Cynthia Valarezo, acted as my French translator and helped to record the responses of community members. While my French is functional, my sister has a full command of the language. The main objective of interviewing such a diversity of groups was to gain a broader view of different perspectives regarding the support afforded to migrant workers and understand how the migrant imprint of Mexicans and Guatemalans is viewed in rural Quebec.

The most critical component in ensuring that my research design was successfully carried out was building rapport with the various research participants, especially with migrant workers who are the central focus of this research project. By getting in contact with the UFCW, instead of approaching other institutions or groups I feel that this provided me with a stronger advantage in building a rapport amongst workers and the Support Centre Staff. As a Latina, the Mexican and Guatemalan workers were more trusting of me and willing to approach me with less apprehension. They also appreciated the fact that I spoke Spanish and had someone to converse with in their own language.

Before initiating the interview process, I spent a couple of weeks getting to know the Support Centre staff and introducing myself to various Mexicans and Guatemalans.
In order to get well established in the migrant community, I found that I needed to socialize with the workers and get a sense of what they thought about my presence in St. Rémi. I spoke to several workers on the streets of St. Rémi, introducing myself, explaining my research and passing out leaflets of information in Spanish. By attending soccer games organized by the migrant workers and a Spanish mass that was held for them in the local Catholic Church, the workers realized that I was interested in learning more about their lives in St. Rémi. Aside from socializing with the workers, when possible I also assisted them in different ways, such as driving them back to the farm or to the bank, translating documents, and answering questions when other staff members of the Support Centre were busy with other chores.

Challenges and Limitations

By researching a vulnerable group such as Guatemalan and Mexican migrant agricultural workers, I needed to ensure that I did not cross any ethical boundaries that would allow for exploitation. Any identifying factors are not included in my thesis. I seek also to ensure confidentiality, even though one of my main goals is to voice the concerns and stories of the migrant workers. Although the names of workers are not given, I still feel that I have facilitated Guatemalans and Mexicans in St. Rémi to speak for themselves. Worker’s quotes and stories convey a real sense of their experiences.

The fact remains, however, that migrant workers still feel a certain degree of vulnerability when providing me with information. There was a palpable sense of apprehension amongst many of the people that I approached to participate in my research. Guatemalan workers in particular I found to be the most wary in being interviewed and in speaking to me about their experiences in the community and working on the farms. Whether reservation and reticence stem from past political and economic
experiences in Guatemala or the fact that they are newly introduced migrants through the FWP, it was evident that Guatemalans were far more hesitant and reluctant to be interviewed than Mexicans. This made it difficult to get a strong sense of the experiences of the Guatemalan community in St. Rémi. This was the biggest challenge faced while doing field research and undoubtedly affected my findings and results.

While I was able to get different perspectives from government officials and community members, the fact that some participants chose to answer questions via email really impeded me from getting valuable responses. Being able to find farmers who would be willing to participate in my research was also one of the most difficult tasks encountered in my field research. This is the main reason why I did not attempt to visit farms in St. Rémi and the surrounding area.
Chapter Five

Migratory Imprint in St. Rémi, Quebec

The presence of a foreign group in the local landscape is often seen as a burden on the labour-receiving society and results in the refusal to accommodate (im)migrants into the local community. In an imagined rural community, offshore workers are continually excluded from this landscape that is stereotypically defined by residing European Canadians with stronger historical roots. Bauder (2006, 176) contends that “migrant workers are not recognized as a fundamental aspect of the rural landscape and the substantial contributions of migrant farm workers is offensively ignored.” I, in turn, intend to argue that the contributions made by migrants in the labour-receiving community have positive implications over the development of the rural landscape in Quebec, in attempt to dispel the common discourse on foreign farm labour that deems migrants to have but little influence.

Temporary migrant workers are represented as objectified labour sources, which according to Bauder (2006) legitimizes their social exclusion. While the status of migrants continues to be dehumanized, the research I conducted in St. Rémi has allowed me to conclude that the appearance of seasonal migrants positively transforms the community. In my thesis, the local rural landscape of St. Rémi is examined as a ‘cultural image,’ essentially assessing how people and objects are ideologically represented in the landscape (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988).

19 Makes reference to the concept that a nation is a community created and imagined by a group of people who identify themselves as a part of this group.
The discourse on the marginal representation of migrant workers promotes the devaluation of the presence of foreign farm workers in Canada. The positive impact that migrant workers have in Quebec is not effectively acknowledged in this province, as temporary migrants continue to be perceived as a foreign element. Their presence has profound implications and by assessing this impact at the micro-level one can gain a stronger appreciation of migrant workers. A study conducted by Bauder, Preibisch, et al (2003) on the impact of foreign farm workers in Ontario established that migrants are an important clientele to local retailers in rural communities. In addition, migrant workers have also changed the social fabric of such local communities through their interactions with established residents. The findings of this case study in Ontario mirror my own in St. Rémi Quebec, denoting a shared experience amongst all temporary migrants employed across Canada.

Migrant farm workers have a longstanding presence in rural Quebec and have not only contributed to the advancement of the agricultural industry but have also proven to have a positive impact in changing the local rural landscape. With more years working in the fields of Canada, Mexicans have far more experience in and knowledge of the temporary worker programs than newly introduced Guatemalans. The number of seasons that migrant workers are temporarily contracted has a significant impact on their perceptions of the host community. Research participants have individually accumulated varying number of years in the program; however, they all share the same experience of dividing their life between Canada and their home country. I interviewed two migrants who are new to the program and the country. Interviews and field observation allowed me to conclude that migrants with fewer working years in the Canadian agricultural industry are the same migrants who are not willing to openly share their opinions and
thoughts on the life of the migrant in Quebec. There are also several workers who have been seasonally employed five to nine years on farms all across Canada. Three of these temporary migrants also had experience working on farms in Ontario.

When recruiting individuals to work on Canadian farms, the gatekeepers of the program will typically contract only those who are married with families in their home country. This strategic recruitment criterion ensures that migrant workers will return to their country after each season, given the ever-present responsibility towards their families back home. All workers interviewed have at least one child to support and two of them indicated that they have five children. One of the strongest motivators for seasonally transmigrating is the prospect of a better and brighter future for their children. One Mexican migrant stated simply, “I come here to take care of my family.”20 This quote is reminiscent of the overall migrant experience, continually echoed by all seasonal farm workers. In opting to work in Canada, migrant workers inevitably lose precious time with their families back home. Some may even miss the birth of their child, which creates a strong sense of guilt amongst many of these men. Migrant workers spend a large portion of their spare time using the public telephones around St. Rémi. The phone is one of the only lifelines that migrants have, allowing them to maintain contact with their families back home. The incessant calls reflect the homesickness experienced by these workers and the sense of isolation felt on the farm and in the rural communities.

Even though they sacrifice large portions of their lives working on Quebec farms in the hope of better providing for their families, and especially improving the lives of their children, migrant workers continue to be underappreciated in the province.

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20 In Spanish, “Vengo acá para cuidar a mi familia.”
The contributions of seasonal agricultural workers are best reflected at the micro-
level, which motivated me to focus my thesis on a small rural community with a large
migrant population. St. Rémi seemed to be the most fitting field site for my research. A
small rural community in southern Quebec, St. Rémi is largely dependent on agriculture
for its economic livelihood. During the migrant peak season this rural town experiences
visible changes. The transformation of the landscape of St. Remi illustrates the positive
social and economic impact that migrant workers have in the labour-receiving country.

“Mexico Day” in St. Rémi

The migrant imprint is best illustrated through a unique event that occurs on a
weekly basis in St. Rémi. During the peak of the migrant agricultural season, Thursdays
are locally acknowledged as “Mexico Day.” This day is also recognized as “pay day” by
the majority of migrant workers. It is also a day when employers set aside time to bring
their employees into town to attend to their banking and weekly shopping.21 St. Rémi is a
central hub in southern Quebec area, where a large portion of migrant workers travel to
on a weekly basis. One community member commented on how Quebecois locals avoid
shopping centres on Thursday evenings because of the massive number of migrants who
congregate in town, congesting the aisles and check-out counters in the grocery stores and
filling the lines in banks. The mass influx of farm workers traveling into St. Rémi on
buses and vans, or biking and walking in from the local farms on Thursdays, is a palpable
phenomenon. It requires first-hand observation to grasp the enormity and impact of this
weekly ritual.

21 It is a stipulation in the contracts that employers are required to provide workers with transportation to
local towns once a week, so that they can do their banking and shopping.
After a long eight- to twelve-hour day of work in the fields, farm workers make their way into St. Rémi to cash or wire their pay cheques and spend their earnings on groceries for themselves and for gifts that they will bring home or send to their families. On a typical Thursday evening dozens of former school yellow buses (See Fig. 5.1), vans, and trucks ship in hundreds of farm-workers, who convene in the local shopping area. There are also hundreds of workers who walk and bike into St. Rémi from farms that are in close proximity to the town. In a community with a population of approximately 5,700, consisting largely of European French Canadians, the presence of the hundreds of Hispanic farm workers is striking (STATCAN 2001). Aside from taking care of their weekly errands, the trip into town also provides these men with an opportunity to socialize with other migrant workers, community members, and the staff and volunteers

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22 According to Statistics Canada (2001), 1.4% of the St. Rémi population are immigrants (non-Canadian born)
of the Migrant Support Centre. For migrant workers Thursdays are a distraction from the monotonous routines out in the fields and provide an escape from the sense of isolation and anomie experienced on the farms. As one worker put it: “We come to make purchases and to stroll around.”23 The streets of this small quiet town in rural Quebec are overflowing and bustling with farm workers. “Mexico Day” not only provides workers with a diversion from work on the farm; it also brings to light the profound economic and social impact that the presence of migrants is having on St. Rémi.

The fact that Thursdays have come to be known as “Mexico Day” also highlights the lack of awareness over the presence of Guatemalans in this community. While Guatemalan migrant farm workers are a newly introduced element into the rural landscape of Quebec, their growing presence also needs to be acknowledged. When engaging in discussion with local community members, most seem to assume that migrants employed in the surrounding farms are all Mexicans, overlooking Guatemalans entirely, despite the fact that they too are becoming significant contributors to the St. Rémi community.

Economic Impacts

Seasonal migrant workers spend months on end in Quebec and have proven to be valuable consumers to the local rural economy, which undergoes a dramatic boost in sales during the peak farming season. Bauder, Preibisch, et al (2003) make note of the fact that migrant workers not only purchase goods and services for their own consumption while being employed in Canada; they also purchase sizeable amounts of goods to take back to their home countries. Migrant workers are clearly restricted by their lack of mobility and the minimal options offered to them as consumers. As a result, they have come to depend

23 In Spanish, “Venimos de compras y para andar.”
on the local businesses of St. Rémi to service their needs, spending significant amounts of money in a community with limited retail facilities.

Financial institutions have greatly profited from the pay cheques of migrant farm workers, motivating them to adapt their services to meet the needs of the new Hispanic clientele. The National Bank of Canada in St. Rémi is continuously opening new accounts for migrant workers during the peak season. Given that migrant workers keep their accounts open year round, banks clearly profit from monthly banking charges. Some workers make note of how they keep a small amount of money in their accounts when they leave at the end of the season to ensure that they do not find their accounts are closed when they return the following year. Many workers who do not hold an account at the local bank also brought to my attention how they are charged a dollar each time they cash their paternal benefit government cheques.

Wire transfer services advertise largely to the Hispanic migrants in the area, the main local clientele. Western Union and Vigo advertisements are mostly in Spanish and clearly target migrant workers who have no other feasible option but to pay the high service fees, which range from fifteen to fifty dollars, to send money home to their families. An advertisement by Western Union that is obviously not targeted towards local French Canadians has the word Mexico in large bold letters, with the Mexican and Canadian flag bordering the poster and is all in Spanish (See Figure 5.2). More importantly these advertisements denote the value of migrant remittances to the local community businesses.
Local stores are the main recipient of notable economic benefits, with migrants spending a significant portion of their pay cheque purchasing everyday necessities and goods to take back home. Both IGA\textsuperscript{24} and Provigo, the main grocery stores in St. Rémi, stock inventory that service the consumption needs and desires of the Hispanic community (See Fig. 5.3). In Provigo, a shelf is dedicated to specialty foods for the Mexican and Guatemalan migrants, carrying an array of tortillas, salsas, peppers, and spices. Seasonal farm-workers are provided with a small reminder of their home country, which helps workers to cope with feelings of melancholy on the isolated farms.

\textsuperscript{24} The grocery store is not known as I-G-A amongst the Hispanic migrant workers, instead the phonetic pronunciation of this establishment is ‘EAGA’
One worker brought to my attention how the local grocery stores raise the prices of their products during the peak migrant season. When he arrived in late April he found meat to be reasonably priced in the local grocery store and decided to stock up. He returned a month later only to find that the price of meat had risen. With limited options made available to migrant workers, they have no other choice but to buy these higher priced products. Grocery stores take advantage of the upsurge in seasonal clientele to profit from migrants’ limited alternatives as consumers.
The Giant Tiger, referred to by migrants as “El Tigre,” is a much frequented bargain store by migrant workers. The large number of workers shopping in this store can again be attributed to the restricted retail options made available in St. Rémi (See Fig. 5.4). Migrant workers are often seen strolling down the streets of town carrying bright yellow plastic Giant Tiger bags from the store loaded with purchases for their families back home. Employees at the Giant Tiger are conscious of the economic necessity and importance of migrant workers to local businesses that have profited from the migrant clientele. One employee at Giant Tiger explained that during the peak season the presence of migrant workers in the store is noticeably visible and she commented on how they contribute to a significant increase in sales.

La Paisita is the optimum example of how local businesses are established to accommodate and profit from the peak migrant seasons in St. Rémi. Owned by a Hispanic family, La Paisita sells electronics, CDs, phone cards, and other miscellaneous items to migrant workers who are the core clientele of this establishment. People
informed me that they go to this store to purchase CDs that play rancheros, cumbias, and other Latin music, along with long-distance phone cards to call their families back home.

Bouffé Maison, a local restaurant, sells home-made tacos every Thursday from 5pm to 8pm, advertising their “Rico Tacos” to migrants with posters around town. Every Thursday and Sunday during the summer two separate family-run businesses drive in from the Montreal area to sell tacos, tamales, and pupusas from their mini vans. They station themselves either beside the support centre trailer or by the soccer field in St. Rémi. The mini vans are crowded by male migrant workers, as there are no visible females farm workers, seeking to buy food that provides them with a taste of home-cooking and a reminder of what they long for from back home. Both family-run businesses sell out of their goods, which motivates them to return every Thursday and Sunday to sell traditional home-cooking to a profitable market. These are all businesses that have created ways to meet some of the needs of this seasonal clientele and simultaneously transform the rural landscape of St. Rémi through the influence of migrant workers.

During the winter month, from November through April, St. Rémi is decidedly not the same bustling town it is during the summer. Business in restaurants and stores dramatically declines and advertisements in Spanish around town are no longer posted. Some of the establishments, including the Bouffé Masion and La Paisita, reduce their operating hours because of the fall in business.

Social Impacts

The seasonal presence of migrant workers has a variety of social implications in St. Rémi. The dramatic inward flow of migrants has generated some notable changes in the socio-cultural landscape of this small town, which consists predominantly of white
French-Canadians. Many community members recognize that St. Rémi is a closed community that is not willing to accept change generated by external forces. A younger female community member drew my attention to how the older generation of St. Rémi is very closed-minded and too wrapped up in their own conventional concerns and priorities. She went on to complain how racism amongst the older community members is quite prevalent. While I never observed any hostility directed towards migrants in St. Rémi, this community member explained to me how many individuals are not open to, nor comfortable with, the influx of migrants who temporarily reside in their community. The same female community member enlightened me on how the younger generation is more willing to accept and welcome migrant farm workers into the community, engendering positive changes.

The presence of Guatemalan and Mexican migrant workers in the rural landscape exposes local community members to different cultural norms, offering them the opportunity to open themselves up to a group of people with different cultural practices from their own. An employee at the local health centre complained that St. Rémi is a community not accustomed to diversity. She elaborated how the largely “white” community is now being offered the chance to interact with migrants who bring with them a different set of cultural values. Some community members brought up how they have learned some general Spanish conversational words and phrases while conversing with migrants on the streets or in the stores. Migrants and community members are also often found together sharing a cigarette and/or drink and the younger community members will often make the effort the engage in a conversation with seasonal farm workers.
In changing the social fabric of the rural community, migrant workers are helping to generate a stronger level of social tolerance amongst the younger generation who are more open and willing to welcome migrant farm workers into St. Rémi. Some community members recognize the integral role that migrants have played in enlightening the local rural community on the acceptance of cultural diversity. This, I believe, is the most important social contribution that migrant workers have made in St. Rémi.

**Figure 5.5 - An image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Saint-Michel Archange**

Two Spanish masses are held annually at the local Catholic Church, Saint-Michel Archange, which is a ministry that consists largely of French-speaking parishioners. These services are held with the Mexican and Guatemalan migrants employed in the area foremost in mind. An image of la Virgen de Guadalupe, the Patron Saint of Mexico and a religious icon throughout all Latin America, adorns the front altar of the Catholic Church, acknowledging the presence of Hispanic parishioners, albeit temporary ones (See Fig. 5.5). In addition, the local Catholic priest revealed in an interview that he recognizes the
importance of migrant workers to the community. He is currently learning Spanish in order to be able to converse more meaningfully with the Guatemalans and Mexicans who attend church.

With the assistance of employers, migrant farm workers organize soccer games every Sunday during the summer. The local soccer field is crowded with workers on a Sunday afternoon, who either participate in a game or leisurely observe. Each farm assembles a team of soccer players, consisting largely of migrant workers who are suited up in strips provided by their employers. Local community members and employers often join the workers as spectators. One of the busiest days out in the soccer field was during the tournament finals, when workers from various farms were bussed in to observe the game from the sidelines and stands (See Fig. 5.6).

Figure 5.6 - Guatemalans and Mexicans playing soccer in St. Rémi

The organized soccer games and Catholic masses illustrate how migrants are changing the socio-cultural landscape of a small rural town that would not experience such cultural phenomena were it not for the seasonal migrants who are employed in the
area. While these events can be seen as a gesture of accommodation on the part of the St. Rémi community, this is not sufficient support for migrant workers in the area.

**Community Perceptions of Migrants**

While community members willing to participate in this study recognize that migrant workers have transformed the local landscape, there are varying opinions concerning the importance of the impact that is registered. A majority of community members appreciate that seasonal migrants are dedicated and hard-working individuals. No one ever expressed displeasure to me about the growing number of Guatemalans and Mexicans migrating into St. Rémi and all understand that seasonal workers are a vital labour force. Although most acknowledge the impact that workers have in their community, some also accept that migrants are a required faction in positively transforming their rural landscape. One local businesswoman identified migrants as a necessary clientele to the local commerce and welcomed seasonal farm workers in her store. At the same time others believed, erroneously, that migrant contributions are minimal. When asked if the presence of temporary migrants has changed St. Rémi, one local businessman explained that he did not feel that migrants have a significant impact on the local industry.

Community members also voiced some concern regarding the treatment of workers on some of the farms and the need to resolve this moral dilemma by improving working conditions. A woman whom I interviewed outside the Giant Tiger store stated that in her opinion, the exploitation of migrants while employed on local farms was intolerable. Although she was troubled by the abuse she had heard about, she was unable to identify any “support systems” in the area. While most community members acknowledge and appreciate the contributions that migrants have made, they do not see
the need to increase support and assistance to migrant workers. Most feel that this is the responsibility of employers and not the local town.

A good number of the community members could not identify any form of support or assistance that is being provided to workers, nor could they comprehend the relevance of being questioned about this. They were unaware of any municipal initiatives that acknowledge the presence of migrant workers in the area. Some of the same individuals believed that migrant workers were content with their current working and living conditions and felt that migrants really had nothing to complain about on the farms. One community member stated that farmers are providing migrants with employment opportunities; as such, there is nothing to be concerned about. The local Catholic priest felt that migrants should take the initiative to learn French, given that the language barrier was a huge hindrance in communication between the seasonal farm workers and the local community.

M. Cousineau, an employer at the Cousineau et fils farm, had nothing but praise for the migrant agricultural workers who were employed in his agricultural operations. He was the only farmer in the area willing to be a research participant in my study. His responses revealed a genuine appreciation for the major contributions made by Guatemalans and Mexicans on his farm. M. Cousineau expressed his gratitude by stating that he and his associates “consider the migrant workers like local workers.” He went on to explain the importance of maintaining a good relationship between himself and his employees. Given that most migrants have agricultural experience in their home country, M. Cousineau believes their farming skills have a positive impact on his business. Migrant workers are an accessible and flexible labour force and M. Cousineau welcomes these exceptionally dedicated migrants workers onto his farm. He also highlighted the
need to build trust with migrant workers as a way of assuring them and easing their experience on the farm. Most importantly, M. Cousineau feels that on his farm migrant workers are treated and given the same respect as domestic workers.

**Migrant Perceptions of the Community**

Migrants have stronger and varying perceptions and opinions regarding their presence in St. Rémi. Most migrant workers feel welcomed by community members and speak very highly of the residents of St. Rémi. One Mexican told me that he and his fellow workers are constantly approached by youths who greet them and initiate conversations. Even with the language barrier, many migrant workers still feel respected by community members. A worker with seven years of experience highlighted how the local community recognizes that he and his associates are hardworking migrants, stating that “Yes, we feel happy when we come here because a lot of people take into account that we are workers.”

Being welcomed into the community eases the sense of isolation experienced by migrant workers.

On the other hand, other seasonal migrants feel that their social and economic contributions, not only as farm workers, but also as vital clientele, are not appropriately acknowledged. Workers complained that they are not supported by the community. One migrant worker, who has come to Canada for nine years, stated, “When the time comes for Mexicans to arrive, all the businesses rise up like foam. We go and the foam goes down because they do not have the same demand.” The fact that their contributions continue to be unappreciated makes many workers feel unwelcome.

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25 In Spanish, “Si sentimos a gusto cuando llegamos para acá porque mucho gente nos tomen en cuenta que somos trabajadores.”

26 In Spanish, “Cuando llega la época que vienen los mexicanos todo los negocios suben para arriba como la espuma. Nos vamos y se queda hasta abajo porque no tienen la misma demanda.”
My assessment of the impact of migrant workers in St. Rémi draws me to conclude that seasonal farm workers are a positive force in the local rural landscape. The economic contributions of migrants have dramatically assisted local businesses and transformed the way in which the local enterprises are run. Socially, migrants have introduced alternative cultural norms and practices, changing “small town” attitudes and increasing levels of tolerance and acceptance of diversity.
“Support Systems” for Migrant Workers

Academic literature does not readily use the term “support system” when discussing migrant workers. It is often treated as an irrelevant concept that does not require analysis. While many scholars discuss the exploitative conditions of migrant workers, no one has yet studied, in extensive detail, the type of support and aid that is offered in the receiving country. The limited scholarly works that acknowledge support and assistance for migrant workers, however, all agree that minimal support is being provided (see, for example, Basok 2004; Benner 2004; Li Wai Suen 2004; and Preibisch 2004). Basok (2004) maintains that migrant workers are a vulnerable group susceptible to mistreatment, given that they lack the knowledge, skills, and support needed to negotiate claim to rights. Li Wai Suen (2004) furthers this argument by stating that the plight of migrant workers can no longer be ignored, stressing the need for a political constituency that supports temporary migrants.

Those at the bottom of the labour market must endure the greatest degree of social and geographical isolation. Migrant workers are allocated a dispossessed and non-permanent socio-economic status, which leave them vulnerable to mistreatment and without access to an array of benefits and rights. Seasonal farm workers do not have the same protection and defense mechanisms as domestic workers in receiving countries and must accept this subordinate status in order to access capital and labour opportunities not available in their home countries. Therefore, “support systems” become a crucial element for migrant workers who require assistance in claiming certain rights in the socially and
geographically isolated space in which they find themselves. Without such support and assistance migrant workers have no safeguard that will help them contest improper living and employment conditions. Therefore, I argue that they require the aid of “support systems” to help them navigate the Canadian legal system in order to gain access to certain rights. Without proper “support systems” migrant workers would experience an even stronger degree of social and geographical isolation and alienation than they do at present.

“Support systems” is a term constructed for this study to describe the different organizations, constituencies, and other political bodies that provide assistance to temporary migrant workers. Each support group I identified in Quebec has differing roles and responsibilities, along with its own views and concerns regarding migrant workers. One of the main objectives of my study is to examine the type of assistance that is being afforded migrant workers by each support group. Another is to analyze the relationship between support groups and migrant workers, so as to question how the latter view the former, especially in my field site in St. Rémi.

Numerous organizations in Ontario offer assistance to migrant agricultural workers. These include KAIROS, Justicia for migrant workers, UFCW, Froniter College, and ENLACE, which are the larger more organized groups in Ontario. This list does not include small community-based groups in each town or formal research centres such as the North-South Institute, which has conducted extensive studies on migrant agricultural workers in Ontario. The various support groups provide legal aid, inform workers of their rights, teach English to workers, petition the Canadian government, and are involved in other forms of social and political activism and advocacy work. The first National Migrant Justice Gathering was held in Toronto in 2006 to draw attention to the plight of
temporary migrant workers and establish a “support system” network for all groups in Canada. The central focus of this gathering was on the precarious status of migrant workers in Ontario and highlighted the fact that there is less concern for migrant agricultural workers in Quebec.

Much of the institutional support for migrant workers is concentrated in Ontario. Quebec, however, is the province that is experiencing a growing influx of migrant agricultural workers. Without the same levels of assistance as in Ontario, the concerns of migrants in Quebec are not as strongly transmitted to the rest of Canada. Migrant workers in Quebec simply do not receive the same degree of aid and in turn experience a greater degree of social and geographical isolation. Through my field research I came to realize that, even though migrant workers are significant social and economic contributors to the community of St. Rémi, very limited support is afforded them in St, Rémi itself.

Migrant Scenarios in St. Rémi

I visited various organizations in and around St. Rémi, including the local city hall (La hotel de ville), the local agricultural support centre (L’Union des producteurs agricoles), the local medical facility (Le centre de sante et de service sociaux), and the local Catholic Church (Saint-Michel Archange) in order to determine the level of assistance provided to migrant agricultural workers in the community. At each location I asked respective representatives if they furnish any type of support to help migrant workers out, and how assist help these workers in adapting to life in St, Rémi. Municipal employees at city hall indicated that assistance is not offered to workers by the local authorities. In addition, they have made no attempts to forge links with migrants directly, nor do they have any future plans to do so.
The mandate of l’Union des producteurs agricole’s is to help in the development and advancement of the farming industry in Quebec, taking into account the collective interest of Quebecois producers and workers. When I asked a representative at the local office in St. Rémi how they assist the migrant agricultural workers in the area, they replied that no support is made available to them at all. L’Union des producteurs agricoles, in short, sees its job as one in which it receives requests from farmers for temporary migrants, which are then passed on to FERME.

Le centre de santé et de service sociaux (CLSC) is the only medical facility in St. Rémi where migrant workers in the area can receive medical attention. At the CLSC, no member of staff speaks Spanish. It is the responsibility of the farmer to provide a translator when bringing in a Guatemalan or Mexican worker for medical attention. In order to diagnose a Spanish-speaking patient, doctors and nurses use a bilingual health questionnaire translated from French into Spanish. By use of this questionnaire, a doctor or nurse is expected to diagnose any ailments that afflict the worker.
The local Catholic Church (Saint-Michel Archange) organizes two Spanish masses for the Guatemalan and Mexican migrant workers in the area, marking the beginning and end of the farming season. One is held to commemorate the beginning of the farming season and the arrival of migrant workers into the area. The other marks the end of the harvesting season and the imminent departure of the seasonal farm workers. I was able to attend the mass marking end of the harvesting season on September 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2006 (See Fig. 6.1). The church was full to capacity with workers from farms in St. Rémi and the surrounding area. After mass, a small picnic and soccer game was organized as a way of expressing the community’s appreciation for the workers. More importantly, the Catholic Church wanted the Guatemalans and Mexicans to feel welcome and included in the community. The local catholic priest explained that the masses are designed to create camaraderie between migrant workers and the Quebecois parishioners.
While there are some attempts in the St. Rémi community to make migrant workers feel more welcome, Guatemalans and Mexicans are not fully recognized or appreciated. Some of the community members interviewed feel that sufficient support is being afforded to workers, making note of the two masses organized for workers. Community members also considered the lodging, transportation and soccer games organized by the farmers as a form of support provided by the community, even though transportation and lodging is a required provision in accordance with the temporary worker agreements.

The only farmer willing to participate in my study proved to be very dedicated to his workers, ensuring that the migrants he employed were properly supported at the Cousineau et fil farm. On the farm it is mandatory that section heads and management take Spanish lessons. Workers are bussed into town to run personal errands and visit the local church; they are also taken further a field to Montreal, for excursions. The employers on the Cousineau et fil farm devote four hours to outline the employment rights of migrant workers on the farm, distributing booklets to all their employees. While this farm has proven itself an exceptional “support system,” migrants have complained of other employers who ignore the need to grant them such assistance.

FERME

All the administrative responsibilities for the SAWP and FWP in the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick were handed over to FERME by the HRSDC. The main role of this private non-profit organization is to respond to the numerous requests by farmers for the recruitment of temporary migrant agricultural workers onto their farms. M. René Mantha, general manager of FERME, explained that the organization is solely

27 Employs a total of eighty Guatemalan and Mexican farm workers.
accountable to its members, which are farmers in Quebec who seek to recruit migrant workers. Even though FERME oversees the managerial operations of the temporary foreign worker programs in Quebec, this organization is not obligated to provide relief or support to temporary migrants they contract for agricultural labour.

M. Mantha made it clear to me that, in his eyes, it is the responsibility of the liaison officer from the Guatemalan and Mexican consulate to visit the farms and ensure that their citizens: (1) are being respectably treated; (2) that they are working and living in suitable conditions; and (3) that any complaints and concerns they have are properly addressed. FERME representatives accompany liaison officers on some of their farm visits, but have not established direct communication with workers themselves. FERME distributes pamphlets printed in Spanish by the Quebec labour standards commission, which relate employment rights in Quebec, but without discussing or explaining this information to migrant workers. Copies of the pamphlets are posted in the workers’ lodgings and copies are also given to consulate personnel for their use.

**The Guatemalan and Mexican Consulates**

After thorough investigation into the “support systems” afforded seasonal migrants, I discovered that the Mexican and Guatemalan consulates are one of only two outlets that workers turn to for assistance, the other being the UFCW Migrant Support Centre. The consulates are responsible for protecting and assisting their citizens in foreign territory. As government representatives in an overseas country, consulates must also maintain a diplomatic relationship with the country in which they are posted in. Concessions are frequently made by consulates in attempting to ensure that they follow through with these duties. As both Guatemalan and Mexican consulates attempt to
appease their citizens as well as the Canadian government and businesses, conflicts often
develop that compromise the role of the consulates.

The Mexican consulate in Quebec explained that one of its major roles is to
uphold the integrity of the SAW program. According to Manuel Cosio Durán, the head
of the Mexican Consulate in Montreal, consulate representatives take part in the
administrative process of the program alongside the HRSDC and FERME and contract
workers in Mexico through the Ministry of Labour. The Mexican consulate has assigned
a liaison officer, Fernando Borja, to attend to issues that arise with the seasonal migrant
workers in Quebec. As a participating partner of the SAWP, consulate liaison officers
must ensure that the provincial and federal government and employers fulfill the legal
terms of the contract. In Quebec, the consulate engages in a series of actions in affording
assistance and support to Mexican seasonal agricultural workers. Through a 1 – 800
telephone number given to workers when they first arrive in Canada, in theory the
consulate is able to maintain twenty-four hour contact with migrant workers in Quebec.28

By calling this number, Mexicans are able to obtain information regarding their
employment rights, lodge complaints regarding their living and working conditions, and
have any other inquiries answered. Mexicans also get in contact with the consulate to
obtain assistance in filing tax declarations29 and paternity benefits30. Señor Cosio Durán
informed me that as a way to compensate for the employment insurance (EI) deductions
that are made to a migrant worker’s pay, and which he is unable to claim, the Mexican
government negotiated an agreement with the Canadian government to provide workers

28 According to the Mexican consulate, they receive approximately 400 hundred calls a week from seasonal
workers.
29 According to the Mexican consulate, they have assisted in filing a total of approximately 3150 tax
declarations in Quebec.
30 According to the Mexican consulate, they have assisted in filing approximately 350 paternity benefits in
2005 in Quebec.
with paternity benefits. Migrant workers who are employed in Canada for a minimum of six hundred hours before the birth of their child are able to receive monetary benefits (55% of their calculated annual salary) every two weeks for a maximum of thirty-five weeks when their contract ends for the year.

The Mexican consulate is required to make regular visits to farms, especially when a worker or employer lodges a complaint. During these visits the consul is to ensure that his charges are living and working under agreed-upon conditions. According to Cosio Durán, if a worker is injured on the farm, arrangements are made with the health insurance company to ensure that the worker’s medical bills are covered. The consul is required to visit the worker in hospital and follow the case until full recovery. The Mexican consulate also maintains that it attempts to advance the migrant rights at the provincial and national level.

The Guatemalan consulate’s role and responsibilities under the FWP are the same as the Mexican consulate under the SAWP. According to Carlos Emmanuel Herrera, a Guatemalan consulate representative, liaison officers deal with complaints and inquiries made by workers through a twenty-four hour 1–800 telephone number, assist with the filing of tax declarations and paternity benefits, inform the workers of their employee rights, ensure that the legal contract terms are followed, and make regular visits to the farms. The Guatemalan consulate did not provide me with equivalent statistical data regarding the number of claims filed, visits to the farms, and calls made by workers. The consulate also insists that liaison officers attend to the needs of the Guatemalan workers from the day they arrive at the airport until they board the plane to return home.

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31 According to the Mexican consulate, they visited some 110 farms in Quebec in 2006.
Migrant Views of Consulate Involvement

Mixed sentiments prevail amongst migrant workers regarding the support that their respective consulates provide. While I encountered a few workers who feel that their consulate provides a sufficient level of assistance the majority of the men I interviewed voiced their frustration and may even be said to harbour grudge and resentment. Much of what I collected is negative opinions that portray the consulate as providing a mediocre “support system” that is not effectively administering to the needs of the workers. Migrant workers, in short, feel that they are poorly served if not neglected by their consulate. Workers not afraid of being vocal made it clear that the consulate places the interests of the Canadian government and employer in front of its own citizens.

The workers feel that the consulate is withholding information concerning their rights in Canada and they have to turn to other resources, such as the Migrant Support Centre, to obtain information that the consulate is required to provide to them. There is also a sense of distrust and apprehension that the consulate will betray the citizens. One worker told me, “certain people are scared that a person conducts an interview and the consulate will hear and then send us home.” Seasonal migrant workers also feel that instead of supporting their own citizens, the consulate will often choose to side with farmers and the Canadian government.

Staff members of the Migrant Support Centre also voiced a sense of frustration against the Guatemalan and Mexican consulate. One staff member explained: “The consulate is also against us. They have a big role and capacity to talk to workers.”

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32 In Spanish, “Cierta gente tiene temor que una persona hace un entrevista y llega oír el cónsul.”
staff also feels that they are pressured to assume tasks that are the responsibility of the consulate, such as informing workers of their rights and filing paternity benefits.

When asked about the Cousineau et fils farm’s stance on the support and assistance being provided by the consulates of migrant workers, M. Cousineau responded by stating that he believes that the consulates have not hired sufficient representatives to administer to the needs of Mexican and Guatemalan citizens. He went on to state that, given the lack of involvement, workers have to turn to the UFCW for support and assistance.

As a major source of support for migrant agricultural workers, both consulates need to be more aware of the sense of distrust and disdain that is felt amongst the workers. While FERME and both consulates state that migrant workers are satisfied with their current situation in Quebec, the workers I talked with made it clear that they are not fully pleased with the assistance afforded them.

33 A survey conducted by the Mexican Labour Department at the end of the 2005 season demonstrated a 92% satisfaction amongst workers.
The Migrant Support Centre, known as the centro de apoyo amongst migrant workers, in St. Rémi is funded by the UFCW and is run by three paid staff members and volunteers who work out of a trailer, driving around to other farming communities in Southern Quebec besides St. Rémi (See Fig. 6.2). The Migrant Support Centre staff travel 45 minutes from Montreal to St. Rémi every Thursday and every other Sunday, providing seasonal migrant workers with various forms of support and assistance. The Migrant Support Centre is one of the only groups that is accessible to seasonal migrants in Quebec and has become a vital lifeline for Mexicans and Guatemalans farm workers. The Migrant Support Centre in St. Rémi was initiated thanks to the efforts of Patricia Pérez, who now heads the Support Centre in Quebec. She originally approached the UFCW for assistance after realizing the geographical and social isolation that seasonal migrant workers were experiencing in Quebec. In 2003, a Migrant Support Centre was initiated.

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34 Every other Sunday the Migrant Worker Support Centre visits seasonal workers in other towns across Southern Quebec.
instituted in St. Rémi. While there are four Migrant Worker Support Centres in Ontario (Leamington, Simcoe, Bradford, and Virgil), Quebec only has one support centre, which attempts to administer not only to the needs of workers in St. Rémi but across all of Quebec.

Besides making regular visits to St. Rémi, the Migrant Support Centre also has a twenty-four hour hotline that is answered by one of the three staff members or a volunteer. The staff responds to issues dealing with salary, compensation, working and living conditions, comprehension of legal documents, abuse, and other problems that workers may encounter while employed on the farms. During my field observations I made note of the fact that the Support Centre staff spend the majority of their time filing numerous paternity benefits for migrant workers. All of the services offered to migrant workers are provided free of charge and are confidential. The centre also launched a radio show for seasonal agricultural workers in the Southern Quebec region. The Spanish radio shows are broadcasted for one hour every Monday and Wednesday morning during the peak season. They play “ranchero” music and update workers on news and announcements concerning their legal entitlements. Migrant workers have voiced their appreciation for this radio program, because it provides them with a form of entertainment that takes their mind off the monotonous and tiring daily routines on the secluded farms.

Staff members and volunteers frequently pass out pamphlets on the streets of St. Rémi, promoting the services that they provide and advertising the twenty-four hour hotline to contact the Support Centre. They also pass out pamphlets on paternity benefits and small booklets that teach basic French words and phrases that seasonal migrants might use on a daily basis. Aside from passing out pamphlets, the staff and volunteers
also frequently stop to converse with Guatemalan and Mexican workers on the streets. The staff and volunteers speak both French and Spanish and the seasonal migrants really appreciate having someone to converse and socialize with in their own language. A staff member commented on how the trailer that the Migrant Worker Support Centre works out of is a place where Mexicans and Guatemalans frequently gather and socialize with staff members and other migrant workers from other farms. Aside from dealing with complaints and enquires, the Support Centre has established a space of comfort and relief for the workers after long days of strenuous work. One staff member remarked, “It is a space for them to sit and chat and chill and to talk about what happened on that farm or this farm. It is an articulating centre. It is important for them to have that space and the centre provides that space.”

The UFCW funded facility has also taken on the task of motivating and talking to seasonal agricultural workers in Quebec to unionize, as a means of protecting themselves from exploitative working conditions. At opportune moments, staff members and volunteers discuss the value of unionization on the farms and building solidarity amongst the workers. The Support Centre argues that the dispossessed and “unfree” nature of the type of labour migrant workers engage in leaves them vulnerable to mistreatment and unable to defend their rights because of their temporary and poorly protected status in Canada. A staff member commented: “We have broken some of that fear and made them feel more comfortable. Made them feel that someone is there. They know that they can call up and we will answer the phone.”

The staff feels that they aid in improving the lives of the workers through the support and relief that they offer. Most importantly, they have become a safeguard for the workers, now that employers know that the Support Centre is looking out for the well-
being of the migrant workers. One staff member affirmed that “migrants generally tend
to trust us because we are more open about things.” Staff members also commented on
how their support helps migrant agricultural workers to shed some of the fear that plagues
them when entering this foreign space, motivating them to speak out.

**Migrant Views of the Support Centre**

The majority of Guatemalan and Mexican workers who are employed on the
farms of St. Rémi and the surrounding area are aware of the services provided by the
Migrant Worker Support Centre. No participants I interviewed ever made a negative
comment about the Support Centre. On the contrary, nothing but praise was expressed,
for migrants are genuinely appreciative of the work being done for them in St. Rémi. One
worker remarked, “I thank them for taking on this type of inconvenience for the Mexicans
because no other person is going to do this, not even someone that works for the
government.” These workers have come to the realization that no other support group
offers them the same degree of assistance as the Support Centre. Without their presence
in St. Rémi, Guatemalans and Mexicans would experience a greater level of social and
geographical isolation, as many of them state categorically how the Support Centre is the
only “support system” that is informing them of their rights and providing them with
essential information that they feel is being withheld by their employer and the consulate.
One worker observed, “Yes, we are informed through the staff.” Another added that,
“here (in Quebec) we are not supported by the consulate, but by the Support Centre.”

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35 In Spanish, “Les agradezco que ellos hagan tomado ese tipo de molestia por los mexicanos porque
ninguna otra persona lo va hacer ni una persona que este trabajando en el parlamento.”
36 In Spanish, “Si estamos informados por medio del centro.”
37 In Spanish, “Aquí estamos apoyado pero no de el consulado si no con el centro de apoyo.”
The workers recognize the need for this facility in St. Rémi. “They are very good,” one man divulged. “Before for the previous workers, there was nothing, and they were blind. Now thanks to them [the support centre] the people now know more.”

Workers feel assured to have a “support system” that is sincerely concerned about their living and working conditions. Several commented on the fact that they can confide in this group and are never turned away or denied support no matter problem that they approach staff members with. One worker summed up the migrant sentiment for the Support Centre thus: “It is great that these people worry about us. For migrants this is good and it makes them feel happy.”

The UFCW staff explained that some farmers in the area have even brought their employees to them, seeking their assistance in ensuring that migrant workers they employ are properly supported. The consulates and FERME expressed no negatives comments about the presence of the Support Centre in St. Rémi and took a neutral stance when questioned about the unionization initiatives. The fact remains, however, that the Migrant Support Centre is the only “support system” with a consistent presence in St. Rémi that ensures that the workers in the area do not feel abandoned or isolated. Without the Support Centre migrant agricultural workers would be at a considerable disadvantage, experiencing even higher degrees of apprehension in a foreign land. The staff helps to ease a sense of trepidation and help the workers to realize that they are not alone in their struggle to gain access to rights.

38 In Spanish, “Son muy buenos, antes otros de los anteriores no había nada estábamos mas serrados de ojos ahora ya gracias a ellos ya la gente ya sabemos mas.”
39 In Spanish, “Que bueno que hay esa gente que se preocupa por uno y por el emigrante esta muy bien . . . y se siente contento.”
The Drive for Unionization

Traditionally, trade unions have been unreceptive towards migrant workers as they were thought to pose a threat to the interests of domestic counterparts who have citizenship rights. According to Michele Ford (2006), contemporary trade unions are now adopting a protectionist sentiment as the number of poorly paid and mistreated migrants employed within their own national boundaries increases. Unions are no longer worried about the national origins of a worker; instead, they have become more interested in collectively organizing workers, overlooking socio-economic status. The task of collectively organizing migrant workers with an “unfree” status has proven to be difficult. Temporary migrant workers face a double disadvantage because they are employed in sectors that are defined as precarious and lack access to citizenship rights. The Support Centre’s efforts to organize workers who have no legitimate claims in Canada will not be easy. This has not discouraged the Support Centre from standing alongside and supporting migrant workers in their efforts to strive for legal recognition.

The unionization initiative has the potential to advance the cause for just and fair treatment. Verma (2005) compiled a report on the implications and impact of migrant farm worker unionization in Canada, highlighting migrants’ need for assistance. Based on the current labour relations law in Quebec, farms will most likely be unionized on a farm by farm basis. If given the opportunity to represent migrant farm workers, unions would then be granted authority to bargain for the terms and conditions of the contract. The Employment Agreement would also be replaced by a collective agreement based on current labour relations law in the province. Verma (2005) explains that while the role of
government agents\textsuperscript{40} would be strengthened, unions would in turn mitigate grievances about working conditions and the enforcement of local regulations. Other advancements brought on by unionization would include increased wages and benefits and more job security.

In Ontario, farm workers are currently prevented from joining a union, impeding the UFCW from formally organizing migrant farm workers in Ontario. A decision made by the Supreme Court of Canada (Dunmore vs. Ontario) in 2002 now permits migrant farm workers in the province to join associations; however, this does not grant them the right to carry out formal negotiations with their employer (Brem 2006). Given that migrant workers in Ontario are prohibited from organizing, the unionization of migrants in Quebec becomes increasingly noteworthy. This is a step towards a national restructuring of the temporary worker programs, essentially improving the conditions of for all migrant farm workers.

The unionization of three farms in Quebec and one in Manitoba is a historical breakthrough for migrant workers across Canada. On November 21, 2006, a hearing was held before the Quebec Labour Relations Commission; however, plans to join the UFCW union have yet to solidify. Not all workers I talked with believe that joining a union will instigate positive changes. These migrants were pessimistic of the opportunities that would be generated by signing union cards. When asked if they would engage in any actions for change, such as joining a union, one worker responded: “Well I am not sure if things would get better.”\textsuperscript{41} Mexicans are currently the only migrant workers willing to

\textsuperscript{40} The role of the government agent would still be a critical component in the operation of the CSAWP; recruiting workers; processing income tax returns, CPP and worker’s compensation claims; providing policy input, and negotiation with the Canadian government regarding the framework of the CSAWP.

\textsuperscript{41} In Spanish, “No se si se mejoraria.”
sign union cards distributed by the Support Centre to join the UFCW. As pioneers and leaders of the unionization initiative, Mexicans strongly believe that being granted the ability to engage in formal negotiations with their employers will not leave them as vulnerable to the unfair and exploitative treatment.

During my field observations, several Guatemalans approached the Support Centre with inquiries concerning the local unionization initiative and the potential implications. As much as they were hesitant to be interviewed for my study, Guatemalans were even more wary and cautious about supporting the unionization drive. They are apprehensive of jeopardizing their employment in Quebec; however, the unionization process obviously aroused their interest.

Theory in Practice

In engaging theoretical literature regarding the distribution of rights to migrants and drawing comparisons to my empirical research, one readily sees how ideas of legitimacy and belonging to a nation-state denies rights and privileges to seasonal farm workers. Given that these workers are merely seen as temporary labour, without permanent standing, their access to rights and privileges is restricted. Furthermore, they are afforded limited assistance from institutional support systems. Those who provide support to temporary migrants realize that these workers require the help of civil society to negotiate at least some access to advantages that nationals take for granted. Otherwise, these migrants would be left in limbo and lost in their struggle for recognition.
Chapter Seven

Listening to Migrant Voices

In his study on giving voice to migrants in Australia, Alastair Davidson (1997) ascertains that ideas of managerialism allow the labour-receiving society to reason with certainty that newcomers should not be granted a political voice until they are deemed to belong. This line of reasoning ensures citizen superiority and in turn upholds the belief that national identity needs to be protected from foreign intrusion. The primary means of maintaining the status quo is to silence the voices of migrants, alienating their presence in a space exclusive to citizens.

Richard Winter (1998) argues that universities, governments, and scientific research institutes hold a monopoly over the production of knowledge. In order to decentralize this process, more action research needs to be undertaken. Action research grants marginalized research participants a ‘voice’ and the opportunity to verbalize their trepidation, to pose questions, and more importantly to contest conventional discourses and accepted standards. By engaging in this type of research I hope to negate the notion that those with a lower socio-economic status are inherently less credible.

While this study has attempted to include the views of all parties involved in the recruitment of migrant workers and the administration of the SAWP and FWP, it is still critical to ensure that the voices of the disenfranchised are heard. Too often the voices of the marginalized go unheard, as there is no forum that permits them to speak out about the oppression they experience in an alienating space. Academics are often too worried about ensuring that they produce an impartial study; however, when the voices and stories
of exploited minorities are silenced, and thereby hidden, it is these accounts that also need to be heard. Here I attempt to give voice to migrant experiences.

One conversation with a migrant worker on the streets of St. Rémi helped me conceptualize the importance and need to ensure the inclusion of migrant experiences in this study. This worker questioned the purpose of this study and more importantly how it would benefit migrants like him. I immediately came to the realization that the voice of the migrant worker was an important element of my research, given the social and geographical isolation experienced by migrants in the Quebec rural landscape. As such, this chapter will provide accounts and personal concerns of the migrant worker, telling the story of the forgotten migrant.

**Toiling in the Fields of Quebec**

As a means of financially supporting their families back home, Guatemalans and Mexicans migrate to Canada through the SAWP and FWP in search of capital and labour. One migrant, who had become a prominent figure in the unionization drive, told me that people like him come, “Out of necessity for our family because there are times in Mexico that there are no opportunities to obtain produce from our harvest.”

Economic hardship in their home country is the main cause of mass outward migration and leads to the acceptance of a temporary contract in the Canadian farming industry, as there are no other feasible options. “There is less or little work in our country,” a Guatemalan farm worker remarked. Without the same wage and labour opportunities in Guatemala and Mexico as in Canada, these workers have to engage in “unfree” labour as a means of financially providing for their families, enhancing not only their lives but also the lives of

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42 In Spanish, “Es la necesidad por la familia porque hay veces en México no tenemos la oportunidad de sacar el producto del la cosecha.”

43 In Spanish, “Es menos y poco el trabajo en nuestro país.”
their families. Migrant workers are willing to enter into economic servitude, given that they have limited options. When asked why a migrant accepts seasonal contract work in Canada, a migrant seasonally working in Canada for three years and with three young children back home responded, “to do something for tomorrow and for the future.” Seasonal work in Canada offers migrants hope and prospect for a better life.

Migrant workers understand that farm work is strenuous and back-breaking labour, since the majority of them are rural peasants and engage in farm work in their home country. They feel that because of their temporary status in Canada, however, that they are not treated on equal terms as domestic workers. One Mexican, who has worked in Quebec for two years but had previously been employed in Ontario for six years, explained that, “people here are a little more racist than in other areas. The bosses are racist.” There are a select few workers who have indicated that they are satisfied with the working and living conditions and do not find fault with their situation on the farm. “Everything is good . . . there are no complaints,” expressed one migrant who had accumulated many years of seasonal experience in Canada and had five children to support back home. Some of the seasonal farm workers who have no major concerns with the conditions on farms are also migrants who are new to the program and have not had much experience working on farms in Canada. Seasonal farm workers who are willing to speak out about their concerns provided strong accounts of their complaints. There are those who made note of the fact that there is no privacy in their housing and that being roomed with a large number of men is not a comfortable and suitable living

In Spanish, “Hacer algo por mañana y por el futuro.”
Rural peasants are generally recruited for the SAWP and FWP because of their farming experience.
In Spanish, “La gente de aquí es un poco más racista que en otro lados. Los patrones son racistas.”
In Spanish, “Todo esta bien . . . no hay queja.”
satisfaction. After further discussion with the individual who claimed to have no complaints about living and working condition, he confided, “The accommodations are more or less satisfactory.”\textsuperscript{48} Being cooped up in these houses frustrates these workers, leaving them with a sense of isolation and abandonment.

The relationship between the employer and migrant worker varies from farm to farm. As one Mexican seasonal farm worker stated, “Everything is fine . . . but on other farms.”\textsuperscript{49} Some workers are satisfied with the relationship that they have with their employer and do not feel mistreated or exploited. Asked if he was content with his employer, a worker with five years seasonal experience in Canada replied, “Yes I am happy, everything is normal.”\textsuperscript{50} There are a few who voiced their displeasure over the pressure placed on them by employers to expedite their work. These workers explained that if there was not such intimidating pressure from their employers, they would be able to work in a more comforting and safe space. Another Mexican migrant, a man who had worked on the same farm for four years and had three children to support back home, expressed his frustration, stating “A lot of the times there is too much pressure at work.”\textsuperscript{51} In having to work on an assembly-line system out in the fields, employers pressure and overextend their workers. Migrants also feel that the language barrier between them and their employer also places immense pressure on them to ensure that their job is properly done. The lack of communication makes the workers feel alienated and unsure of what is expected of them.

\textsuperscript{48} In Spanish, “Las acomodaciones es mas o menos.”
\textsuperscript{49} In Spanish, “Todo esta bien . . . pero en otras farmas.”
\textsuperscript{50} In Spanish, “Si estoy contento, todo esta normal.”
\textsuperscript{51} In Spanish, “Muchas veces si hay demasiado presión al trabajo.”
The relationship that migrant workers have with the consulate is also conflict-ridden, as strong hostility is felt towards liaison officers who are required to ensure the security and needs of their citizens are properly administered to. Migrant agricultural workers feel that their consulates are not adequately supporting them; instead, they place the interests of the Canadian government and farmers ahead of their own citizens. There have been consistent complaints by the workers that the consulate is not accurately informing them of their right of access to paternity benefits or tax declarations. In an interview with one of the more outspoken workers, a veteran who had worked in Canada for eight years, asserted that “the consulate and the boss have not allowed us to make our declaration and to fill out the papers so they can return some of the taxes that they have taken from us.”

There are some workers who feel that the consulate is leaving them in the dark, not providing them with the appropriate information when needed. “They have denied us things and they have exploited us because they are taking away things that belong to us,” the same outspoken migrant worker continued to lament. Unable to trust the consulate and sensing that they are obscuring pivotal information from them, many migrants feel alienated and exploited.

The utmost critical issue highlighted by migrant workers is their denial in accessing rights and the lack of information made available to them regarding their rights in Quebec. Another outspoken Mexican worker put it thus: “Well, they do not bring to light what we can obtain through the government,” making reference to the administrators of the programs. No one is adequately informing migrants of their

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52 In Spanish, “El consulado y el patrón nos han negado para hacer nuestro declaración y para rellenar los papeles para que nos devuelvan un poco de los impuestos que nos quitan.”
53 In Spanish, “Porque nos han negado cosas y nos han están explotando porque nos quitan de lo que nos corresponde.”
54 In Spanish, “Pues, no nos dan a conocer que nosotros podemos obtener por parte del gobierno.”
employment rights. As a result, they are uncertain of what is deemed a work violation or exploitative behaviour. Some of the workers feel that information about their rights is intentionally hidden from them as a way of ensuring that they not gain access to certain rights.

When asked if they knew about their employee rights here in Canada, the majority of the migrant workers felt uninformed and ignorant on how to access certain rights. A worker explained his lack of knowledge, stating: “Because one does not know . . . one does not know how to obtain.”55 While a Guatemalan new to the program maintained that “we do not know and we do not have any idea.”56 They realize that they have claim to certain rights; however, parties like the consulate and their employers do not respect the Canadian laws that apply to migrant workers. One Mexican worker, who had worked in Quebec for four years, emphasized how even when provided with information, “the documents and information are given to us in French and not in Spanish.”57

Migrant workers also highlighted major concerns about unfair wages and voiced their belief that, as a result of their non-permanent status, they are forced to accept minimum wage. Aside from not being paid time and half for overtime labour, migrants also feel that it is not fair that they are required to pay taxes, Employment Insurance, and Canadian Pension Plan, without the right to lay claim to the same benefits as Canadian citizens or others who reside in the country. Seasonal farm workers are required to pay into these federal and provincial schemes and are not guaranteed the same social services as domestic workers. One Mexican worker, who had accumulated four years of seasonal experience in Canada and had four children to support back home, complained that, “the

55 In Spanish, “Porque no sabe uno . . . no saber como obtener.”
56 In Spanish, “No sabemos y no tenemos idea.”
57 In Spanish, “Los documentos y la información nos dan en francés y no en español.”
taxes that we pay are too much and we do not even have any rights. We pay employment insurance and do not even have that support.”58 Migrant workers also feel that too much money is being deducted for administrative costs. “I have to pay for a visa and the flight ticket and little is left . . . it would be better if they helped us and did not take so much away from us,”59 one Mexican migrant, who had worked in Quebec for three years, declared. A Guatemalan worker felt it was not right that Guatemalans had to pay rent while Mexicans did not, arguing that, “paying for rent and paying for food, little is left for us.”60 As such, these workers realize that changes need to be made to the current programs. One of the more outspoken Mexican workers summed up migrant sentiments thus: “Yes, they have abused us. Since we are humble and come from marginalized parts of the world they take advantage of us and I do not think they should do that. They should have a bit of a conscience and hopefully there is a group to help us.”61 While it is acknowledged that the Support Centre attempts to inform migrant workers of their rights and motivates them to collectively organize, these workers still feel ignored and alienated because of the lack of information that they are receiving.

While it is difficult for migrant workers to access a forum to voice their concerns, even if provided with the opportunity to speak out against this mistreatment many are still apprehensive to do so. Many have voiced the insecurity they have against verbalizing their concerns through a public forum. The fear instilled in migrant workers of the possibility of losing their job silences them. As one Mexican migrant revealed after nine

58 In Spanish, “Los impuestos que se pagas demasiado y ni tenemos ningún derecho. Pagamos seguro de empleo y no tenemos ese apoyo.”
59 In Spanish, “Yo tengo que pagar la visa y el boleto del vuelo y nos queda poco . . . sería mejor que nos apoyaran que lo que nos quitan.”
60 In Spanish, “Pagando renta y pagando comida nos queda poco.”
61 In Spanish, “Si han abusado de nosotros. Como somos humildes venimos de provincias marginadas entonces se han aprovechados de nosotros y yo pienso no deberian hacer eso y que tengan un poco de consciencia y ojala un grupo que nos ayudan.”
years after labouring in Canadian fields, “There is fear . . . certain people are scared that a person will be interviewed and that the consulate will find out and send us home.”

Although many people were willing to speak to me about their problems off the record, when asked to sign a consent form, several were clearly wary of who would gain access to this information. There are the select few who are willing to speak out against the social injustices and discuss their problems with me. “I am not frightened,” expressed one worker with only two years of experience in Quebec and who felt that it was critical that their accounts be made public. Mexican migrant agricultural workers have more years of experience in the program and therefore are more willing to speak out and engage in actions of change such as joining the UFCW unionization initiative. I had the opportunity to talk with Mexicans who are a part of the unionization of migrant farm workers; they are the most vocal, yet at the same time apprehensive to share their accounts. A more active migrant worker explained, “For us it is not easy to leave our families to come and work here. We are leaving something very valuable behind to obtain something economic, but it is not just that we leave our families and come here to give a great deal of our lives here for almost nothing because the moment will come when we retire and what will they give us?” These workers realize that improvements need to be made to the program and that they are the ones who must initiate this change. I learned a great deal from these particular Mexican farm workers regarding the migrant experience in Quebec.

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62 In Spanish, “Hay temor . . . cierta gente tiene temor que una persona hace una entrevista y llega ha oír el cónsul y nos manda de vuelta.”
63 In Spanish, “A mi no me da miedo.”
64 In Spanish, “A nosotros no es fácil dejar nuestra familia para venir a trabajar acá. Estamos dejando algo mas valioso para obtener lo económico pero nos es justo que dejemos nuestra familia y venir para dar nuestra mayor vida aquí casi por nada porque llegó el momento cuando uno se pensiona y cuanto regala a uno?”
Thrown together in a working relationship, interactions between Guatemalans and Mexicans are difficult to define and characterize. Guatemalans on the whole are very passive about being included in my study and did not say anything about the Mexicans whom they worked alongside. The opinions of the Mexicans, in turn varied, from expressions of resentment to senses of camaraderie towards the Guatemalans. Mexicans who feel a certain degree of hostility towards Guatemalans make note of the fact the Guatemalans have not been here as long as they have and, as a result, they are not accustomed to working with them. One Mexican, who had many years of experience working under the SAWP, explained simply, “We are not used to working with Guatemalans.” The fact that some employers threaten Mexicans workers by telling them that next season Guatemalans will be replacing Mexican workers creates antagonism, since Mexicans have been working on Canadian farms longer than Guatemalans. One worker noted that “Mexicans are always treated differently;” this creates animosity towards Guatemalans who have done nothing other than migrate to Canada in search of a better life, just like Mexicans. Mexicans feel a certain degree of ownership over seasonal agricultural work in Quebec and have difficulties accepting the presence of Guatemalans in the province.

Other migrant workers feel a sense of alliance and brotherhood, with their co-workers, transcending national identity. When interviewing a Mexican and Guatemalan together they expressed to me that both these groups work well together, “We give each other a hand,” explained the Mexican worker. There is an understanding that they have a shared experience and they both have the same reasons for temporarily migrating to Canada.

65 In Spanish, “No estamos acostumbrados trabajar con guatemaltecos.”
66 In Spanish, “Los Mexicanos siempre son tratados diferente.”
67 In Spanish, “Nos damos la mano.”
Canada. One worker active in the unionization drive on the farms clarified this relationship by stating that: “We are immigrants like others who come from different countries and come here in search of ‘the bread for every day’ that they have to take to their family . . . All Latinos that come here to work in agriculture should understand that we are all human beings.”68

Mexicans who hold no hostility towards Guatemalans feel that, as Latinos, they all work well together: “Yes we are the same; we speak Spanish and understand each other.”69

One Mexican worker, who had worked in Quebec for four years, summed it up best by emphasizing, “We need a friendship/camaraderie.”70

The workers certainly realize that improvements need to be made in the temporary foreign worker programs. While they all voiced various complaints that changes ought to be made, there are a few more opinionated workers who expressed that they must be the ones that initiate this change. As one of the three active workers affirmed “That is why we have to sign up to form a union.”71

There is an interest amongst workers to join the union, as both Guatemalan and Mexican have approached the UFCW Migrant Support Centre inquiring about the unionization initiative in Quebec. Temporary migrants believe that if their work were to be acknowledged and appreciated, effective amendments could be made. As another of the three active migrants reasoned, “We hope that the government will support us and that they take into account that because of the work that we have done in agriculture that this country is a leader in agriculture and they should

68 In Spanish, “Somos inmigrantes como de otros países que llegan aquí a buscar el pan de cada día para la familia que hay que llevar . . . todo latino que llega aquí a trabajar a la agricultura deben entender que somos seres humanos.”

69 In Spanish, “Si somos los mismos, hablamos español y nos entendimos.”

70 In Spanish, “Necesitamos un compañerismo.”

71 In Spanish, “Por eso hay que firmar y hacer el sindicato.”
appreciate that.”\textsuperscript{72} Migrant workers have stated that the Canadian government needs to ensure that the consulate and employers treat them respectfully. One worker, who was hesitant to be interviewed at first, demanded that, “They need to give the order to treat the worker right because employers are the ones that do not treat us well.”\textsuperscript{73}

Seasonal farm workers expressed to me that their hope that my study can help to enhance their situation, by bringing them more support. One worker with four children to support and eight years of seasonal experience in Canada told me, “It is good that someone takes an interest in what we are doing here and that they take us into account more than anything.”\textsuperscript{74} One Mexican migrant pleaded that, “Hopefully, there will be a solution, probably not very soon but not too late either . . . we want some one to listen to us.”\textsuperscript{75} While almost all workers fear reprisal for voicing their concerns, many realize that this is the only way to facilitate change. The accounts of these workers require immediate attention as these are workers who have much to contribute not only by means of their stories but also through their hard labour in the fields of Quebec and all of Canada.

Even though migrants have numerous complaints and concerns regarding their treatment they will still return the next season to toil in the fields of Quebec. When questioned if they wanted to return the following year all migrant workers stated that they would be coming back: “If God allows me.”\textsuperscript{76} If the employer does not bid for their return, then it becomes even more difficult to get back into the program and onto another

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} In Spanish, “Esperemos que el gobierno nos apoye más que se dan cuenta que por nosotros los que trabajamos en el agricultura que el país esta en primer lugar de agricultura y debe de valorar eso.”
\item \textsuperscript{73} In Spanish, “Que de la orden que traten bien a los trabajadores porque los empleadores son los que no nos tratan bien.”
\item \textsuperscript{74} In Spanish, “Es bien que alguien se interese en lo que estamos haciendo aquí y que nos tomen en cuenta mas que nada.”
\item \textsuperscript{75} In Spanish, “Ojalá haya una solución, a la mejor no muy pronto pero tampoco tan tardada . . . queremos que nos escuchen.”
\item \textsuperscript{76} In Spanish, “Si Dios me deja.”
\end{itemize}
farm. While most would rather stay home with their families there are far better economic opportunities in Canada. One Mexican with nine years experience in Canada made it clear that, “We come to make some capital to survive in Mexico.” Another worker expressed his apprehension about returning by stating bluntly, “I no longer want to return, but if there is no work I have to return.”

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77 In Spanish, “Venimos hacer un poco de fortuna para sobrevivir en México.”
78 In Spanish, “Ya no quisiera yo pero si no hay ninguna chamba tengo que volver.”
Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that migrant experiences are ones that are marked by: (1) an “unfree,” non-permanent status; (2) social and geographical isolation in the rural landscape; (3) and a lack of support and appreciation in the space in which workers are temporarily situated. These mechanisms afford the state and employers considerable control over these farm workers, who in turn have limited influence in the labour-receiving society. While I have attempted to highlight the key differences between the Guatemalan and Mexican experience under the FWP and SAWP, I have come to realize that it is pertinent to consider the situations I encountered as a shared migrant experience, equated more with collective struggle than national identity. Furthermore, even though the presence of seasonal farm workers in rural communities has a positive impact in transforming the local landscape, as illustrated in my case study of St. Rémi, next to nothing is being done to increase support and assistance for workers who contribute much to the economy of the places in which they labour. Finally, I would like to note that the introduction of the FWP in Canada has marked a regression in the development of temporary foreign worker programs and in the approach that the Canadian government is taking to manage the inward flow of migrants. Therefore, it is essential that I lay out the views articulated and frame them in a context of possible future change.

I place great value in ensuring the migrant community of St. Rémi, Quebec is at ease with my research and that they understand that I have no intention of using the information, collected through interviews and field observations, in a manner that would exploit migrant farm workers for my own benefit. The general response from migrants interviewed for my thesis is strongly positive. They have many insights into how my
study can bring to light their current situation in Quebec. As one migrant poignantly remarked: “It is very good [what you are doing] because people will become interested in what we are doing here . . . above all else that they take us into consideration.” Another migrant worker identified my study as a medium for educating the public on their own cultural norms and tradition, given that people need to understand that Mexico and Guatemala are two distinct countries with many different identities. The majority of migrants insist that the general public needs to be better informed of the problems seasonal farm workers face, in the hope that it will increase support and assistance towards their struggle for access to certain rights and benefits in Quebec. The men I interviewed believe that if others hear their suggestions for change, then there is the potential to ignite a positive response that could potentially lead to a solution. When asked to comment on my research, one worker insightfully responded: “What we want is for our bosses to take us into account, and that we receive better treatment. If a Mexican is treated well, he will work well and will behave himself.” Seasonal farm workers believe it is imperative that Canadian society learns to value their labour and acknowledge migrant appeals for improvement of current conditions.

The inconsistencies and discrepancies within the temporary foreign worker programs implemented by the Canadian government have generated serious complications and warrant amendment. The differences between the SAWP and FWP, along with disparities amongst the various MOU with the participating labour sending countries, leave migrants vulnerable to greater control over their labour by the state and

79 In Spanish, “Es muy bueno porque es bien que alguien se interesa en lo que estamos haciendo aquí . . . y que nos tomen en cuenta más que nada.”
80 In Spanish, “Lo que curemos es que los patrones se llenan más considerados con nosotros y que tengamos un mejor trato. Si el Mexicano le tratan bien, trabaja bien y se porta bien.”
employers. The fact that each province of Canada has its own distinct set of employment rights and benefits further complicates the working and living conditions of migrants. Such variances are creating a larger pool of controlled workers with limited influence over the stipulations of the temporary foreign worker programs. In the past, Caribbean workers in Ontario and Quebec have slowly been replaced by Mexican workers (Griffith 2003). Currently, an increasing number of Guatemalan workers being recruited into Quebec reveal a similar trend, allowing for tighter controls over this more easily manipulated labour force.

The main discrepancies of the temporary foreign worker programs necessitate clarification, in order to confront the problems plaguing temporary migrants. Although labour-receiving communities continue to brush aside the contributions made by migrant workers, it is important that their views and suggestions are listened to. Given that it is migrants who are most affected by the stipulations of the temporary foreign worker programs, it makes sense to pay attention to their concerns. Ultimately, the most effective means of engaging migrant opinions is to include them into the process of negotiating the terms and provisions of the contract with the participating states and employers. The Canadian government might profit from a shift towards a balanced relationship amongst the participating parties, ensuring the development of an accommodating temporary foreign worker program thereby addresses the key inconsistencies that trigger unsatisfactory living and working conditions. Until this can materialize, misunderstanding, disappointment, frustration, and ill-feeling are certain to grow. We must learn to listen to what the migrants who are the focus of this thesis have to say.
As non-citizens, migrant workers lack political entitlement, limiting the political influence they have in a labour-receiving country and in turn reinforcing their vulnerability and invisibility. With minimal control over their political rights and benefits, migrant workers have little option but to accept what the state and their employers dictate. For many migrant workers, access to permanent residency has become a right that they aspire to attain. One worker explained to me that it guarantees them the opportunity to return the following year. As temporary migrants, their status leaves them vulnerable to repatriation and exclusion from the program. In addition, migrants depend on the labour and capital in the receiving country because it offers them a means of supporting their families back home. Temporary farm workers would benefit from the assurance that they will be returning the following season. Given that migrants spend a significant portion of their life working in the fields of Quebec, it is only right that the many months that they spend in Canada contribute towards attaining more secure immigrant status and, in the long term, permanent residency for those who wish it.

The participating states and employers need to reconsider the charges and taxes that are deducted from seasonal farm workers’ wages, since migrants lack access to the same political rights and benefits as citizens. Guatemalans feel that they should not be paying rent, while Mexicans find it unjustifiable that they must contribute to their flight costs. If migrants are deemed a required and necessary labour force within Canada, then the state needs to take on the responsibility of covering the financial costs of recruiting temporary migrants, who come from financially marginal countries and are dependent on the labour and capital for a decent livelihood.

Proper safeguards to support and protect migrants, a transparent system of checks and balance have yet to be installed in to the Canadian temporary foreign worker
programs, intensifying the social and geographical isolation experienced by seasonal farm workers. Even though migrants value the assistance offered by the Migrant Support Centre in St. Rémi, there is still a need for more assistance to be forthcoming from the consulate, Canadian government, and local communities. Migrants have pointed out that, in their opinion, consulates need to staff more liaison officers to attend to their needs. Similarly, the Canadian government in turn ought to ensure that the stipulations of the contract are being respected by all participating partners in the program.

The most effective “support system” that has proven to ignite change has been civil society. Migrants require the assistance of those with citizenship status in order to gain knowledge and access to rights and benefits that are accorded to all citizens. Local rural communities can boost migrant support by accommodating the needs of seasonal farm workers, by making them feel more welcome; for example, having more services made available in Spanish and finding ways to include migrants into the community decision-making process. While this will help to enhance the migrant experience, at the same time the host community will also be supporting the development of human and social capital from which it will benefit. It is crucial that support be made available to migrant workers employed in Quebec by those with access to citizenship rights, as seasonal farm workers with temporary status are incapable of campaigning for access to rights and benefits on their own.

The Canadian government defends temporary foreign worker programs as a solution to the lack of workers willing to engage in unskilled, stigmatized labour. I would argue against this assessment, as such programs offer firms the ability to succeed in the competitive market by being provided with a more reliable work force, which is paid less but is willing to work more hours. At the same time, migrant workers are not offered the
same benefits and rights as domestic workers. While it is understandable that small firms are unable to increase wages to attract domestic workers, larger companies with a greater competitive advantage palpably profit from the “unfree” labour force. Ultimately, it is more beneficial to firms and the state to contract temporary migrants instead of domestic workers.

The global inequalities that trigger and maintain mass outward migration from poorer countries cannot continue to be disregarded. The neoliberal agenda that national governments and international organizations have adopted in advancing trade, investment, and other policies in an attempt to expedite development, has been proven to be the root cause of global inequalities. Instead of relieving the poor and working class of their social and economic disadvantage, neoliberalism has widened the socio-economic gap, generating even greater inequalities and increasing the flow of migrants who seek capital and labour in richer countries. Solutions must be found to increase the economic and social opportunities of the poor and working class in the labour-sending countries. At the same time there needs to be a reduction of the control that external forces, such as First World countries and international agencies, have over Third World countries. Temporary foreign worker programs are not a long-term answer to the lack of labour and capital in poorer countries; instead, these programs have proven to be provisional solutions to a global phenomenon that requires large scale amendment.

The perceptions and opinions of the labour-receiving state and employers concerning migrant labour also warrant rectification. Seasonal farm workers are perceived solely as a form of non-permanent labour, recruited to fill the void of unskilled workers in Canada, detaching human attributes from migrants. As a result, migrant workers are forced to cope with an ambiguous, “unfree” status that renders them
vulnerable to unjust treatment. Migrants have expressed that they no longer want to be thought of as workers merely recruited to toil in the fields of Canada. Seasonal farm workers want the local rural communities to acknowledge and appreciate their economic and social contributions. At the same time they wish local rural communities to realize that migrants are also humans who sacrifice large portion of their lives by being away from their families, often causing them to suffer from a strong sense guilt and anxiety. The views and concerns of seasonal workers warrant serious consideration, given that migrants have insightful reflections to contribute towards future amendments of the temporary foreign worker programs of Canada.

Transmigration is an under-researched phenomenon that requires further examination in order to fully understand the multifaceted issues that drive the outward flow of temporary migrants. The complexity of the temporary foreign worker programs in Canada has generated many problems for migrants recruited from various countries of the South. By identifying these inconsistencies, a stronger grasp of the rationale behind the employer’s decision to select workers through a certain program or from a specific country over another can be attained. There are broader discrepancies that have yet to be addressed. These include questioning why it is that migrants from different nations, who work alongside each other on the same farms, are recruited under different temporary foreign worker programs and Memoranda of Understanding. Why does Canada need two different mechanisms to contract migrant workers? Would it not be more feasible to have one lucid foreign worker program under which all migrants are recruited?

The geopolitics of temporary migration has significant implications for the migrant experience and identity. Academics need to study how the socio-political experience of migrants in their home countries shapes the migrant identity in the labour-
receiving country and how this impacts a worker’s reaction in a geographical space that is more economically and politically stable. Decades of civil war and political instability in Guatemala have long-lasting effects on migrants who are instilled with a history of violence and fear. Therefore, what ought to be questioned is how the political experience of temporary migrants in their home countries has shaped how migrants will engage in political actions in the labour-receiving country to gain access to certain rights and benefits that are accorded only to citizens.

By taking on undesirable jobs, ones that local nationals are unwilling to engage in, migrants are forced to accept the obstacles and drawbacks that are ascribed to this “unfree” labour. Ultimately, the voices of the most important faction of these temporary foreign workers programs are not being listened to. This thesis at least has served as a forum in which migrants vocalize their concerns as well as express their appreciation. For now all I can do is listen to the stories and accounts of migrant experiences in Quebec and provide an academic context, conveying migrant voices to a larger audience. The most meaningful way to repay migrants is to take their insights into the programs into serious consideration. Academics, government officials, and policy makers need to be more innovative and inclusive in the decision-making process, as migrants have proven to have insightful and feasible suggestions. The voices of migrant workers need to be heard and can no longer be silenced.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of Montérégie Region

(Source: Transport Quebec)
Appendix 2: Interview Outline for migrant workers

1) Are you a legally documented worker in Canada? (If not, the interview ends)
2) What is your home country?
3) Do you have a family and children back home? If so, how many children?
4) What type of work do you do here in Canada?
5) What type of work do you do back home?
6) Why did you choose to work here in Canada?
7) Have you sought permanent status in Canada?
8) How did you hear about the program to come and work in Canada?
9) Are you pleased with the working and living conditions here in Canada?
10) Do you feel welcome in the community that you are living and working in?
11) What can be done to improve your working or living conditions?
12) Are you or others you work with doing anything to better your working or living conditions?
13) Is information on your employment rights available to you?
14) Has your employer been supportive and accommodating?
15) If given the opportunity, would you engage in any activities or actions to improve your living or working conditions? If so what?
16) How do you feel about the different support groups providing assistance and advice to migrant workers?
17) How long have you been working under this program?
18) Do Mexicans and Guatemalans work well together? Explain?
19) Do you wish to return to Canada next season? Why?
20) Do you wish to relocate to another area or province? Why?

Appendix 3: Interview Outline for Support Groups and Organizations

1) What is the name of your organization?
2) What is your position/title in the organization?
3) Where is your base of work?
4) What are some of the issues and difficulties that migrant workers must endure in their day to day lives while being employed on farms in Quebec?
5) What type of assistance and support are you providing to migrant workers?
6) Is your aid improving their situation? If so how?
7) What else needs to be done to improve the migrant workers conditions?
8) What can the government do to ensure that the rights and needs of the migrant workers are met?
9) Do you find that migrant workers are discriminated as a result of their ethnic/racial background or nationality? If so how?
10) Do find it difficult to provide support and counseling to migrant workers? If so, what obstacles impede this process?
11) What are some of the major differences between the FWP and SAWP that distinguish between the two groups of migrant workers?
12) Are Guatemalan migrant workers facing more or less difficulties under the FWP, than Mexican migrant workers that work under the SAWP?
13) Do you find that migrant workers in Quebec face more/less difficulties in comparison to migrant workers in other provinces?

Appendix 4: Interview Outline for the Mexican and Guatemalan Consulates:

1) What is your position/title in the organization?
2) Do you believe that the SAWP or FWP has been an effective program in meeting the workforce demands in Canada?
3) What type of assistance and support do you provide to migrant agricultural workers of Quebec?
4) How often do consulate liaison officers visit the farms that your citizens are employed on?
5) How many calls or enquiries does the consulate receive on a weekly basis from migrant workers?
6) What are some of the issues and difficulties that migrant workers must endure in their day to day lives while being employed on farms in Quebec?
7) What is your opinion regarding the presence of the Migrant Support Centre in St. Remi?
8) What is the consulate’s opinion regarding the unionization of migrant workers on the farms of Quebec?
9) What does the consulate do if they find that a farmer is maintaining inappropriate working and living conditions?
10) How does the consulate inform migrant agricultural workers about their employee rights in the province of Quebec?
11) Why do you believe that many migrant workers were scared to be formally interviewed by me for my Master of Arts Thesis? Where does this fear stem from?
12) What do you have to say in response to the claims that the Canadian government and Support Centre offer more assistance and support than the consulate liaison officers?

Appendix 5: Interview Outline for F.E.R.M.E.:

1) What is your position/title in the organization?
2) Where is your base of work?
3) What type of support or assistance does F.E.R.M.E. provide to migrant workers?
4) Why do Guatemalans and Mexicans work under two different programs?
5) What are some of the major differences between the FWP and SAWP that distinguish between the two groups of migrant workers?
6) Do you regularly visit the contracted workers on farms?
7) What are some of the issues and difficulties that migrant workers must endure in their day to day lives while being employed on farms in Quebec?
8) What is your opinion regarding the presence of the UFCW and the centro de apoyo in St. Remi?
9) What does F.E.R.M.E. have to say in regards to the unionization of migrant workers on the farms of Quebec?
10) Why has there been such an increase of Guatemalan workers into Quebec?
11) Are workers duly informed regarding their employee rights in the province?
12) What happens to farmers that are found maintaining inappropriate working and living conditions?
13) Why do you believe there has been such an outcry regarding the living and working conditions and the rights of migrant agricultural workers of Canada?
14) Why do you believe that many Mexican workers were scared to be formally interviewed by me for my Master of Arts Thesis? Where does this fear stem from?

Appendix 6: Interview Outline for Employers

1) How long have you been contracting migrant workers?
2) How many migrant workers do you have on your farm?
3) Do you have both Guatemalan and Mexican migrant workers on your farm?
4) Why are you hiring migrant workers to work on your farm, instead of local workers?
5) Are migrant workers making a positive contribution on your farm and if so in what way?
6) What is your opinion regarding the unionization of migrant farm workers in Quebec?
7) In what way do you provide support to migrant workers on the farm?
8) Do you feel that the Canadian government is providing enough support to migrant workers? Could you explain your answer?
9) Do you feel that the Guatemalan and Mexican consulates are providing enough support to migrant workers? Could you explain your answer?
10) Are migrant workers being informed about their rights on the farm? And if so in what way?
11) What type of training do you provide to migrant workers?
12) Is the Spanish language a huge barrier on the farm for the workers? How do you deal with this barrier?
13) Do you feel that you have built a good relationship with your workers, specifically the migrant workers on your farm?
14) Why do you feel that some migrant workers are afraid of their employer and of speaking out when in times of difficulty?
Appendix 7: Interview Outline for Community Members

1) Have you had interaction with migrant workers? If so in what way?
2) Do you feel that Migrant workers have made a positive contribution to St. Remi (economically and socially)? Explain?
3) Is the St. Remi community doing anything to provide support to migrant workers?
4) Do you feel that the St. Remi community should be doing anything to make migrant workers feel more welcome?
5) Do you feel that migrant workers face any difficulties while working on the farms or in the St. Remi community?
6) How have migrant workers changed St. Remi? Has this been a positive or negative change?