

## Backgrounder: ‘Accelerated’ TFW approvals reveals widespread abuse of program

### The Accelerated Labour Market Opinion (ALMO)

The Accelerated Labour Market Opinion, or ALMO, is a recently created fast-track stream within Canada’s Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program. The ALMO is intended to be for higher skilled workers, such as management, professional and technical occupations – skills types O, A and B under the National Occupation Classification (NOC).<sup>1</sup>

The ALMO stream was launched on April 25, 2012.<sup>2</sup>

### AFL Evidence

The AFL obtained documents showing a list of employers by business name and province with an approved ALMO through an *Access to Information* request with the federal government.

A copy of the documents can be found [here](#).

There were 4,839 employers approved for ALMOs for the eight months between April 25, 2012 and December 18, 2012.

AFL researchers flagged ALMO approvals for employers that would not normally hire high-skilled workers, such as gas stations, convenience stores, franchise restaurants and so on as “questionable.” While it’s possible that employers of these businesses accessed the ALMO stream for managers, it’s highly unlikely given the sheer number of these businesses.

The AFL calculates that about half of the approved ALMOs (49.8 per cent) are highly questionable.

Alberta-based employers appear to be the worst offenders with 1,542 questionable ALMO approvals out of 2,640 (58.4 per cent) and more than half (54.6 per cent) of the total approvals.

<sup>1</sup> [Cached copy] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, “Temporary Foreign Worker Program – Accelerated Labour Market Opinion Fact Sheet,” March 23, 2013, [http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?hl=en&biw=1369&bih=835&client=psy-ab&q=cache%3Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrsdc.gc.ca%2Feng%2Fworkplaceskills%2Fforeign\\_workers%2Ffalso%2Ffactsheet.shtml+%&og=cache%3Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrsdc.gc.ca%2Feng%2Fworkplaceskills%2Fforeign\\_workers%2Ffalso%2Ffactsheet.shtml+%&gs\\_l=hp.3..0i20l2j0l2.14601.17015.9.17502.7.7.0.0.0.246.927.0j4j1.5.0...0.2...1c.1.8.psy-ab.NOHB50YaNcl&pbx=1](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?hl=en&biw=1369&bih=835&client=psy-ab&q=cache%3Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrsdc.gc.ca%2Feng%2Fworkplaceskills%2Fforeign_workers%2Ffalso%2Ffactsheet.shtml+%&og=cache%3Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrsdc.gc.ca%2Feng%2Fworkplaceskills%2Fforeign_workers%2Ffalso%2Ffactsheet.shtml+%&gs_l=hp.3..0i20l2j0l2.14601.17015.9.17502.7.7.0.0.0.246.927.0j4j1.5.0...0.2...1c.1.8.psy-ab.NOHB50YaNcl&pbx=1)

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, “Government Of Canada Announces a more Efficient and Responsive Temporary Foreign Worker Program ,” April 25, 2012, <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?crtr.sj1D=&crtr.mnthndVI=5&mthd=advSrch&crtr.dpt1D=&nid=670919&crtr.lc1D=&crtr.tp1D=&crtr.yrStrtVI=2008&crtr.kw=temporary%2Bforeign&crtr.dyStrtVI=26&crtr.aud1D=&crtr.mnthStrtVI=2&crtr.page=1&crtr.yrndVI=2012&crtr.dyndVI=17>

Province	Questionable ALMO approvals	Total ALMOs approved (April 25 to Dec. 18, 2012)	Percentage of Questionable ALMO approvals
British Columbia	628	964	65%
Alberta	1,542	2,640	58%
Saskatchewan	48	151	32%
Manitoba	15	34	44%
Ontario	159	900	18%
Quebec	2	29	7%
New Brunswick	1	2	50%
Nova Scotia	8	16	50%
P.E.I.	2	3	67%
Yukon	0	1	0%
No province specified	1	91	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>4,839</b>	<b>50%</b>

## Canadians Bypassed

There are no requirements that employers consider Canadians for open positions. Employers using the ALMO process simply need to show that they advertised the job on the federal government's Job Bank for 7 days. Advertising is the same as recruiting, under the ALMO stream.

## Low-Wage Agenda

Under the ALMO stream, not only can employers bypass Canadians for open jobs, they can also pay foreign workers lower wages – up to 15 per cent lower – than prevailing wage rates if Canadians in the same workplace accept the same low wage.

If there are no Canadians in the workplace, then employers are free to bring in foreign workers at lower wages than those for similar jobs in the same region.

## Lax Rules

Less than 20 per cent of ALMO applications will be subject to a compliance review.<sup>3</sup>

Very little documentation is required during the application process, though employers are required to keep some in case of a compliance review.

No real penalties for abuse: should an employer be found non-compliant, the federal government may deem them ineligible for future ALMOs, possibly revoke work permits not yet issued, share information for further investigation, or subject the employer to greater scrutiny in the future.

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<sup>3</sup> [Cached copy] Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, "Temporary Foreign Worker Program – Accelerated Labour Market Opinion Fact Sheet," March 23, 2013, see above for web link