

Community Data Report

Volume II — Temporary Foreign Workers and Employers
Across Nova Scotia

1,650

Workers

57

Employers

21

Municipalities

588

Employees at Risk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1,650 workers. 57 employers. 21 municipalities across Nova Scotia.

These figures represent workers and employers who signed the NS Promise petition at nspromise.ca. They are not a count of all temporary foreign workers in Nova Scotia facing permit expiry. The petition captured those who were reached through community outreach and chose to sign. Workers in rural areas, those with limited English, those already out of status, and those unaware of the initiative are not reflected in these numbers. The total population of workers in comparable circumstances across the province is likely considerably larger. The figures in this report should be read as a documented floor, not a ceiling.

The workers represented in this report came to Nova Scotia legally, through provincial and federal immigration programs. They worked. They paid taxes. They applied for permanent residency through the pathways designated for them. They waited. In many cases, their permits expired while they waited. In many cases, their files were subsequently closed without a decision having been made.

This report documents the scale of that situation across Nova Scotia, the policy changes that shaped it, and the impact on workers, employers, and the communities they are part of. It concludes with the specific action NS Promise is requesting from the province.

All figures in this report are drawn directly from the verified NS Promise petition dataset or from publicly announced government policy. External sources are identified where cited.

PART ONE

The Workers

1,650 verified worker signatures across 21 Nova Scotia municipalities.

Age

The average age of workers in this dataset is 26.5 years. Ninety-six percent are between 18 and 35.

This is a workforce concentrated in its prime productive years. These workers came to Nova Scotia at the beginning of their adult lives and built their careers here. The age profile reflects a population with decades of potential economic contribution remaining.

Time in Nova Scotia

Time in Nova Scotia	Workers	Share
Less than 1 year	86	5.2%
1 to 2 years	401	24.3%
2 to 3 years	818	49.6%
3 to 5 years	305	18.5%
More than 5 years	39	2.4%

70.5% have been in Nova Scotia for two or more years. 20.9% have been here for three or more years. These workers have employment histories, tax records, leases, and in many cases families in this province. The majority of this workforce is not newly arrived. They are established residents who have built their lives in Nova Scotia communities over a sustained period of time.

Where They Are

Municipality	Workers
Halifax	719
Dartmouth	487
Sackville	90
Bedford	79
Sydney	60
Truro	54
Kentville	31
Antigonish	15
Bridgewater	24
Amherst	13

Windsor	13
New Glasgow	12
Yarmouth	9
Other municipalities	14

Workers in this dataset are present across the province, from Cape Breton to the Annapolis Valley to the South Shore. While Halifax and Dartmouth account for the largest concentrations, significant populations exist in Truro, Kentville, Sydney, Bridgewater, and Antigonish. This is a province-wide situation, not one confined to the capital region.

Sectors

Sector	Workers
Food Service	300
Retail	227
Trucking and Logistics	221
Construction	213
Security	156
Healthcare	119
Cleaning and Maintenance	77
Hospitality	57
IT	44
Agriculture	9

Workers in this dataset are employed across sectors Nova Scotia has publicly identified as facing critical labour shortages. Food service and retail together account for over 30% of the workforce represented here. Trucking and logistics, construction, and security represent an additional 36%. These are not peripheral roles. They are the operational backbone of daily life in Nova Scotia: the people moving goods across the province, building its housing stock, staffing its hospitals and campuses overnight, and serving food to its residents. Healthcare alone represents 119 workers, in a province that has publicly and repeatedly acknowledged a shortage of healthcare support workers.

PART TWO

Permit Status and the Application Timeline

Application Status

86.7% of workers in this dataset, 1,430 people, have submitted active PNP or AIP applications. They applied through the designated pathways and are waiting for a decision.

Time Waiting on PNP or AIP File	Workers
Less than 6 months	194
6 to 12 months	424
12 to 18 months	367
18 to 24 months	243
24 to 36 months	189
More than 36 months	13

445 workers have been waiting 18 months or more. 202 have been waiting two years or more. These are workers who filed their applications and continued working, paying taxes, and living in Nova Scotia while waiting for a response. The wait is not a choice. It is the processing timeline of the programs they were directed to use.

Permit Expiry

Expiry Period	Workers
2024 to 2025 — already expired	276
2026	939
2027	434

276 workers in this dataset have already lost legal work authorization. 939 more reach that point within 2026 alone.

Work permit validity periods in many cases do not extend long enough to cover the full processing time of a PNP or AIP application. A worker who applies on time may find their permit expires before their application receives a decision. At that point they are out of status while their file remains open and unresolved. The permit expires not because they failed to act, but because the processing timeline of the program they were enrolled in exceeded the validity of the authorization they held.

The May 2026 EOI Policy Change

On April 27, 2026, the Province of Nova Scotia announced a 12-month validity period for Expressions of Interest under the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, effective May 1, 2026.

Under the transition measures accompanying this change:

Workers who submitted an EOI before May 1, 2024 had their files removed from the queue on May 1, 2026. No decision was made on their application. No response was issued on the merits of their file. The province describes this as an administrative measure and states that a closed EOI is not a refusal. Workers whose files were closed in this manner may submit a new EOI if they continue to meet eligibility requirements.

Workers who submitted an EOI between May 1, 2024 and April 30, 2026 remain in the pool until April 30, 2027 unless selected before that date. Workers submitting from May 1, 2026 onward are subject to a 12-month validity period.

In practice, workers who had been in the queue for two or more years had their files removed on May 1, 2026 without receiving any substantive response. Rather than processing the existing backlog and issuing decisions, the province cleared the queue by removing the oldest files. Workers are directed to begin again.

For workers whose work permits have already expired or are expiring during this period, resubmitting an EOI does not restore legal work authorization. A new EOI is an expression of interest in the program. It is not a work permit, a nomination, or a guarantee of selection. Workers in this situation are simultaneously out of status and at the beginning of a process they have already been through, in many cases for two or three years.

Workers whose occupations fall outside the 2026 priority framework, which emphasizes healthcare and skilled trades at TEER 0 to 4, may find that a new EOI does not result in selection regardless of how long they have already been in Nova Scotia or how established their employment is.

What Losing Status Means in Practice

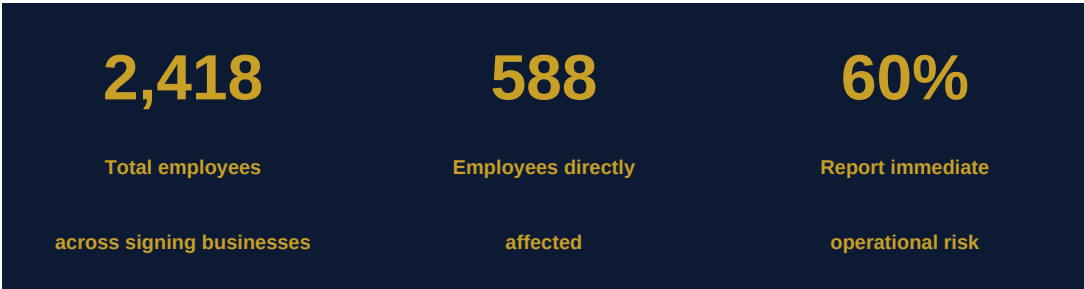
A worker whose permit has lapsed cannot legally work. They cannot earn income. In most cases they cannot leave Canada without abandoning a PR application that has been in queue for years and cannot be resumed from outside the country. They are physically present in Nova Scotia, unable to participate in the economy, unable to leave without losing everything they waited for, and without certainty about what comes next.

For 276 people in this dataset, this is today's reality. For 939 more, it arrives before the end of 2026.

PART THREE

The Employer Impact

57 Nova Scotia businesses signed this petition. These are registered employers who participated in provincially and federally designated immigration programs. They brought workers to Nova Scotia through proper channels, trained them, retained them, and built operations around them.



Business Size

Size	Employers
Small — under 20 employees	22
Medium — 20 to 99 employees	27
Large — 100 and over	8

86% of signing employers are small or medium businesses. For businesses of this size, losing two or three trained workers is not a personnel adjustment. When a small cleaning company loses half its crew, it cannot service its contracts. When a food service business loses trained kitchen staff, it reduces operating hours, which affects revenue and the shifts available to remaining employees. When a construction crew loses a trained tradesperson mid-project, timelines extend and costs rise for the employer, the client, and in the case of housing, the broader public.

Sectors

Sector	Employers
Construction	17
Other	11
Food Service	10
Hospitality	5
Trucking and Logistics	4
Cleaning and Maintenance	4
Retail	3
Security	2
IT	2

Construction represents 17 of the 57 signing employers. Nova Scotia has a documented housing shortage and the provincial government has identified housing capacity as a priority. The construction sector workforce includes a significant proportion of temporary foreign workers. Permit expiry is directly reducing the labour supply the province needs to build its housing stock.

Security employers in this dataset employ workers at hospitals, universities, and government facilities. Vacancies in these positions carry consequences beyond normal staffing gaps. Food service, hospitality, trucking, and cleaning and maintenance employers collectively represent workers embedded in the day-to-day functioning of Nova Scotia communities.

Employers in this dataset consistently report that positions vacated by workers whose permits have expired are not being filled through local recruitment. They have posted positions. They have conducted interviews. The domestic labour supply for many of these roles in Nova Scotia is insufficient to replace the workers being lost.

The Manitoba Comparison

Nova Scotia is not the first province to face this situation. In September 2024, the Manitoba government announced a temporary public policy offering two-year work permit extensions to approximately 6,700 temporary foreign workers whose permits were expiring while their PNP applications were being processed. Manitoba's Labour and Immigration Minister Malaya Marcelino stated at the time: "At a time when skilled labour is in high demand, our government is making sure that people who are already in the province, who have contributed economically and who have expressed a desire to call Manitoba home, are given that opportunity."

In April 2025, Manitoba extended the policy a second time, covering workers whose permits had expired in 2024 or 2025. The process was designed to be accessible: it cost employers \$230 in filing fees, compared to more than \$1,000 in fees and a processing timeline of 70-plus business days for a standard Labour Market Impact Assessment. Workers could obtain a two-year Manitoba-specific work permit extension through a streamlined application process while their permanent residency applications continued.

The federal government agreed to Manitoba's request. Workers remained legally employed. Businesses retained trained staff. The policy achieved its purpose without creating a permanent change to immigration levels or pathways.

According to the Manitoba Business Council's labour force survey of September 2024, 1,050 PNP workers contributed an estimated \$150 million to Manitoba's GDP. The economic case for retaining workers already embedded in the provincial labour force is well established. Nova Scotia faces comparable circumstances. The mechanism exists and has been applied in a directly analogous situation.

Manitoba figures cited from the Manitoba Business Council labour force survey, September 2024, as published on nspromise.ca. Minister Marcelino quote sourced from Manitoba government press release, September 2024. Independent verification recommended for formal legislative use.

PART FOUR

In Their Own Words

Across 1,650 worker submissions and 57 employer submissions, several consistent themes emerge. Workers describe situations in which they or their families made significant financial sacrifices to come to Nova Scotia, including taking on debt, selling assets, or leaving behind established livelihoods in their countries of origin. Many describe years of employment, tax contribution, and community involvement in Nova Scotia, and express uncertainty about their futures despite having followed the designated process. Workers describe the financial pressure of being unable to work legally while their files remain unresolved, and the position of being unable to leave Canada without abandoning applications they have waited years for.

Employers describe trained and experienced workers becoming unable to legally continue employment. They describe the operational consequences of those losses, the difficulty or impossibility of finding local replacements, and the investment in training and relationships that is lost when a worker is removed from the workforce by permit expiry. Several employers note that the workers losing status are among their most dependable staff, and that the impact extends beyond individual positions to the broader functioning of their businesses and their remaining employees.

Workers

"I came to Nova Scotia with hope, determination, and a dream of building a better future through honest work. Leaving behind my home, family, and comfort was not an easy decision, but I believed in the opportunities this province offered."

Food Service worker, Halifax — 2 to 3 years in Nova Scotia

"When I came to Canada, my family made an enormous sacrifice. They sold their land to fund my education and my future here. I also lost my father during this journey. I cannot go back with nothing. I have built everything here."

Construction worker, Dartmouth — 1 to 2 years in Nova Scotia

"My ability to work is not just a legal status. It is my only means of survival and dignity. Without it, I will be left with nothing in a country where I have given everything."

Worker, Halifax — 2 to 3 years in Nova Scotia

"I applied for my PNP in January 2024 under the food service supervisor stream, according to the rules at that time. I was assigned a case ID. They kept us waiting until my work permit expired, then they implemented all the new rules to files already in the queue. I did nothing wrong. The rules changed around me."

Food Service worker, Antigonish — 2 to 3 years in Nova Scotia

"My family and I have been living in Nova Scotia for almost three years. We have worked hard, contributed to the community, and established our future in Canada. We have continuously adapted to changing immigration pathways. We have done everything asked of us."

Food Service worker, Dartmouth — 2 to 3 years in Nova Scotia

"I have a single mother. She spent everything she had to send me here to build a career. I gave everything to my workplace. I did everything to stay here. But due to this system, I cannot even reach a work permit extension."

Food Service worker, Windsor — 2 to 3 years in Nova Scotia

"I came to Nova Scotia in 2019 as an international student and completed my diploma at Mount Saint Vincent University. I have continued to live and work here since graduating, contributing to the province's workforce every year."

Food Service worker, Bedford — More than 5 years in Nova Scotia

Employers

"These workers are largely in our production department and these roles cannot be replaced by local talent. Losing them would require us to be open fewer hours. Fewer hours means layoffs for the Canadian workers in other roles and departments. In a word: devastating."

Food Service employer, Halifax

"The employees whose work permits expire in 2026 are 15% of our workforce and have each been with us for over 2 years. When we try to hire, the only applicants we are getting are others with work permits that expire in 6 to 12 months. How will we run our business?"

Hospitality employer, Halifax

"I have been a designated employer since the AIP program started. I jumped through every hoop the program asked of me. I went to the office once a week for almost a year trying to get updates. Now the longest-serving employee's file has gone stale. Please do better."

Food Service employer, Halifax

"This is multiple crews and millions in revenue lost or needing to be replaced with a workforce that does not exist. Expiring work permits means all construction slows down significantly across the board."

Construction employer, Halifax

"Losing these workers will impact the ability to deliver service to clients that are part of the critical infrastructure of this province. This will result in higher costs for most segments of society, including the government."

Security employer, Nova Scotia

"I have already had to part with 3 employees because their permits expired over the last six months. I am on the verge of losing 2 more in 2 weeks, 2 more in 6 weeks, and 2 more in the fall. It is completely unfair to the workers who built their lives here and to the small businesses built around them."

Cleaning and Maintenance employer, Bedford

PART FIVE**Fairness and Reasonable Expectation**

The Nova Scotia Nominee Program and the Atlantic Immigration Program were established as designated pathways to permanent residency. Workers were invited to participate in these programs, to meet their requirements, and to build their lives in Nova Scotia on the understanding that a processing pathway existed.

Workers in this dataset applied under the terms those programs presented at the time of application. Many made consequential decisions on that basis, including relocating to Nova Scotia, taking on debt, leaving employment elsewhere, and committing years of their working lives to employers and communities in this province. Processing timelines extended beyond what those workers had been given reason to expect. In a number of cases, the rules governing their applications changed after their files were already in the queue, with those changes applied to files that had been waiting for years.

The question of what obligation flows from that sequence, between a government program that invites participation and the people who reorganize their lives around it, is one that the government is better positioned than this report to address. NS Promise does not seek to characterize that relationship. It places the sequence of events on the record: the programs existed, people relied on them, the terms changed, and the consequences fall on the people who had the least ability to anticipate or absorb them.

PART SIX

What NS Promise Is Asking For

Two years. A bridge. Nothing more.

Our ask is specific, limited, and achievable.

We are asking the Nova Scotia government to introduce a temporary public policy offering work permit extensions of up to two years for temporary foreign workers who are currently active in the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program process and Atlantic Immigration Program and whose permits are expiring or have recently expired.

Specifically, we are asking for:

First, a retroactive work permit extension of up to two years for temporary foreign workers whose permits have expired or are expiring and who have an active application or recently reset file under the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program or the Atlantic Immigration Program. Both programs brought these workers here. Both programs owe them the same protection while their applications are being processed.

Second, that this policy apply only to workers who have been residing in Nova Scotia for a minimum of 12 continuous months. This ensures the policy protects people already genuinely rooted here, not those who might relocate from another province specifically to access this measure. Nova Scotia's system should not become a pressure valve for interprovincial movement. It should protect the people already here who came here for the right reasons and stayed.

Third, that the Province of Nova Scotia prioritize temporary residents with a demonstrated history of long-term residence in Nova Scotia within its PNP and AIP nomination processes. Workers who have established a sustained presence in this province have a documented record of contribution to Nova Scotia communities and its labour force. That record should be a meaningful factor in nomination decisions. Workers who built their lives here in good faith, who have employer relationships, community ties, and a history of tax contribution in this province, are not the same as new applicants entering the system for the first time. The nomination process should reflect that distinction.

That is the full extent of our ask.

This is not a request to bring anyone new to Nova Scotia. Every person this petition speaks for is already here, already working, already part of this community.

We are asking for a bridge. Two years. Enough time for the applications already in the system to be properly processed. Enough time for people who have already given years of their lives to this province to find out whether they get to stay.

These workers are not asking for charity. They are asking for what they were promised.

Data Note

All worker and employer data in this report was collected through the NS Promise petition at nspromise.ca. Entries were reviewed for data integrity, including consent verification, duplicate removal, and screening for invalid or incomplete submissions, prior to inclusion in the final dataset. Worker and employer quotations are reproduced from petition submissions with minor formatting edits only. No content has been altered. For media inquiries or further information, contact NS Promise at nspromise.info@gmail.com or www.nspromise.ca.

Prepared by **Gurman Singh**, Research and Policy Lead, NS Promise