

Vancouver & District Labour Council (VDLC), B.C. Government & Services Employees Union (BCGEU), Canadian Union of Labour Employees (CULE) -

Philippines Solidarity Tour 2018

Background:

In 2008, the VDLC organized a Solidarity Labour Tour to the Philippines to witness first-hand the organizing conditions and vibrant workers' movement. At that time the Philippines was considered the second most dangerous country for trade unionists where extra-judicial killings were a daily threat to those active in the movement for social justice. The Tour resulted in the creation of the VDLC's "Adopt an Organizer in the Philippines" program which helps Canadian unions and individuals support Philippine organizers and/or their organizations in their efforts to improving the conditions of workers and other sectors of Philippines society. The BCGEU has been a long-standing participant in this program and CULE has also had a similar program in place since the VDLC Tour. The VDLC program is ongoing.

Current situation:

In 2018, the Philippines has often been making international news under its President, Rodrigo Duterte.

President Duterte came to power in May of 2016 in a landslide victory. He is a lawyer who had previously been Mayor of Davao, Philippines for 22 years. He earned a reputation of being a strong man against crime during his tenure. Many credit his Presidential win to his campaign promise of a 'war on drugs' and vocally supporting the extrajudicial killing of drug addicts and other criminals.¹ Since June 2016, "an estimated 13,000 people have been killed in the war on drugs."²

President Duterte also appealed to workers in the Philippines by promising some reforms such as an end to contractualization.³ In the country, this is commonly referred to as "endo" or "end-of-contract" which is a common practice to hire employees for less than six months to avoid being covered by the Philippine Labor Code requirement to regularize employment after that period. An end to "endo" has not yet manifested as promised.

According to the International Trade Union Confederation's 2017 report⁴, the Philippines is currently listed fourth in the top ten world's worst countries for workers. It received an

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/01/philippines-president-rodriigo-duterte-urges-people-to-kill-drug-addicts>

² https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-ramiro-duterte-philippines_us_5a8f3c57e4b01e9e56b9cae1

³ <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/781289/duterte-vows-to-stop-contractualization>

⁴ https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/survey_ra_2017_eng-1.pdf

overall rating of “no guarantee of rights” for workers. These type of labour conditions become the breeding ground for why so many Filipinos search for livelihood abroad in countries like Canada.

According to Statistics Canada, Filipinos are the fourth largest ‘visible minority’⁵ group in the country. From Census 2016, we see that the Filipino community is the fastest growing racialized group in Canada, numbering 780,125.⁶ Filipinos have been coming to Canada since the 1960s. Most recently, Filipinos have entered as Temporary Foreign Workers, especially caregivers to provide childcare and elder care. Some have credited the Caregiver Program as the defacto national childcare program and one reason Canada still has no universal childcare program.

Given the marked growth in the Filipino community, it is more important than ever for the Canadian union movement to understand the situation in the Philippines and why so many Filipinos have migrated to Canada.

Canadians and Filipino workers also share a common fight in resisting attacks on workers’ and other human rights. The Philippines has a dynamic labour and social justice movement that Canadians can learn from. Participants will also get to share some of their Canadian organizing experiences with the Philippines hosts. Participants will meet with Filipino workers and social movements to learn how workers are interconnected. We hope to explore issues that are relevant to Canadians such as:

- The impact of Canadian companies in the Philippines
- The need for job creation when there is a lack of industries
- The exploitation of natural resources and how they are being exported

Objectives:

In the spirit of international workers’ solidarity, the VDLC, BCGEU, and CULE are co-coordinating a solidarity tour to the Philippines to:

- learn about the daily lives and struggles directly from the Filipino people, particularly those involved in the struggle for workers’ and other human rights in the Philippines.
- begin to understand the historical and current political and economic relationship between Canada and the Philippines.
- continue and deepen the existing partnerships between Canadian unions and Philippine organizations to work in solidarity with Filipinos in their struggle for workers’ and other human rights.

⁵ ‘Visible Minority’ is the terminology used by Statistics Canada.

⁶ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/census-2016-highlights-diversity-housing-indigenous/article36711216/>

- gain advocates in the Canadian trade union movement on the Philippines situation to strengthen international solidarity between Canada and the Philippines.

Timeframe:

Programming is underway for the approximate dates between November 26 – December 10. Two days for air travel may leave delegates with approximately nine program days interspersed with three ‘free’ days. There will be some time to see the sights of the Philippines and to experience its culture.

Costs:

We are working on estimates for a registration fee that will include accommodation, ground transportation, guides/translation and some meals for the tour. **Note:** Costs for ‘free days’ which may include sightseeing and social activities are not included in the overall registration fee.

Air Flights:

The registration fee (once estimated) will not include travel to and from Manila. For the purpose of estimating your total expense, as of April 4th, airfares with Cathay Pacific estimates: Vancouver-Manila return \$1000, Toronto-Manila \$1200, including taxes.

Please do not book flights until you receive confirmation that you have been accepted onto the tour.

Please contact solidarity@cule.ca with “Philippines Solidarity Tour 2018” in the subject line and send us your name and email if you are interested in the tour.