

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL
WORKERS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

by

Prajina Maskey

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University

Halifax, Nova Scotia

August 2022

© Copyright by Prajina Maskey, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research problem.....	5
Importance of the study	6
Position of the researcher.....	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
The agricultural sector in Canada and its challenges.....	8
Seasonal Agricultural Workers.....	14
Analysis of the SAWP.....	17
Benefits of the SAWP	17
Costs to SAWs	21
CHAPTER 3: ANALYTICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	28
Critical Discourse Analysis.....	28
Discourse.....	30
Silences	31

Governmentality	32
The Genre of Institutional Press Release	34
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS	36
Approach to CDA	36
Research Limitations	50
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	52
Low focus on seasonal agricultural workers.....	52
High focus on domestic groups.....	61
Labour shortage and seasonal agricultural workers.....	69
Reflection of structural agricultural challenges in news releases	72
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	78
Summary of the research	78
Limitations of the research.....	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sample size breakdown.....	39
Table 2: Context of the producer of the news releases	41
Table 3: Descriptions of themes.....	42
Table 4:Major themes by year.....	47
Table 5: Internal relations between themes.....	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Word cloud of themes.....	45
Figure 2: Themes bar chart	46
Figure 3: Word cloud of labour sub-themes.....	48
Figure 4: Labour sub-themes bar chart	48

ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to understand the role of the government in producing or reproducing inequalities faced by seasonal agricultural workers in Canada by applying critical discourse analysis to government news releases. The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, implemented by the Federal government, allows foreign workers to temporarily work in Canada when domestic workers are unavailable. While the structure of the program fills labour shortages in agriculture, it also creates inequalities for seasonal agricultural workers. The study establishes that the power imbalance and inequalities faced by seasonal agricultural workers partly stem from challenges in the Canadian agricultural sector and this is reflected in the government discourse. The results from the study suggest that the government news releases provide very small dialectic space to the topic of seasonal agricultural workers. Instead, they focus highly on domestic groups and their issues.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CAP	Canadian Agricultural Partnership
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
GNSDOA	Government of Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture
LIMA	Labour Market Impact Assessments
OMAFRA	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs
SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program
SAWs	Seasonal agricultural workers
TFWP	Temporary Foreign Worker Program

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people who have supported and guided me throughout the process of writing this thesis. I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Karen Foster. I could not have done it without your encouragement, guidance, and constant support. Thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Fitting as well for guiding me during my initial research phase. I would also like to thank Dr. Kate Swanson for being an excellent second reader. I am grateful to everyone in the Department of International Development Studies. Thank you to Dr. Matthew Schnurr and Dr. Robert Huish for being great Research Coordinators. Also, thank you to Nicole Drysdale for helping me navigate my time as a graduate student. I would also like to thank my family and friends for believing in me. I appreciate all of you for your support.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I explore the complex socio-political position of seasonal agricultural workers (SAWs) by situating them deeply within the agricultural sector in Canada and examining government discourse about them. In doing so, I demonstrate how the inequalities faced by SAWs are interwoven with current agricultural issues. Then, I analyze the role of government discourse in producing or reproducing such inequalities. My primary aim is to apply critical analysis of government discourse to contribute to knowledge in this area.

The SAWs issue is deeply rooted within the agricultural sector in Canada. The agricultural sector, which employs about 250,000 people in Canada, has faced persistent labour shortages over the past few decades (Statistics Canada, 2021). The seasonal nature of farm work, long hours, the aging labour force in Canada, and negative perceptions about working in agriculture have led to a lack of domestic workers available to work in the sector (Zhang et al., 2021; Burt & Meyer-Robinson, 2016). However, there is more to labour shortage than merely a lack of domestic interest in farm work. It is a product of inherent challenges that exist within the agricultural sector. The sector is under tremendous pressure to remain globally competitive, so it is consolidating farms to achieve economies of scale (Lerohl and Unterschultz, 2000). Qualman and Tait (2004) argue that global competition as a result of free trade is the underlying cause of this problem. Free trade policies and investment agreements between nations have put all the world's farmers into a single hyper-competitive market by bringing down economic barriers (Qualman & Tait, 2004). Furthermore, the pressure is intensified as farm input

costs are rising, making profit margins shrink, leading the sector to find both capital-expanding and labour-saving options (Ferguson, 2007). One of the ways the government is responding to this is by providing funding and aid; for example, the government provided \$5.6M in 2021 to the agricultural sector (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Another government response to this issue is the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) (Preibisch, 2007). The SAWP allows farm employers to hire workers from Mexico and participating Caribbean countries when domestic agricultural workers are not available (Government of Canada, 2020). The program allows foreign agricultural workers to legally enter Canada and work for periods of 6 weeks to 8 months, typically for a single designated employer (Government of Canada, 2020). The origin country undertakes the recruitment process and issues temporary work permits that allow SAWs to work on Canadian farms unable to recruit sufficient domestic workers (Ferguson, 2007).

The SAWP has become an important labour supplement program in the agricultural sector and SAWs currently account for 1 in 5 workers in the sector (Labour Force Survey, 2021). The program and SAWs are especially beneficial when the host country faces unexpected unemployment shocks in the market; for instance, between February and May of 2020, the Canadian unemployment rate increased by 8.1% points due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Larue, 2021). Statistics Canada (2021) published an online press release under “The Daily” stream with the headline “Temporary foreign workers help put food on Canadians' tables during the pandemic”, highlighting the vital role of the SAWs in supplementing the labour force. In this way, SAWs and the SAWP have proven to be highly beneficial for the agricultural sector in Canada.

As a result of the benefits of the SAWP, the agricultural sector is increasingly relying on SAWs. The number of SAWs increased by 15% in 2021 from 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2022). The growing reliance has incentivized employers to make decisions based on the continued presence of the SAWs and it has led to negative consequences for the SAWs such as stagnating working conditions (Ferguson, 2007). In addition, there is an inherent power structure built into the SAWP because the benefits to the Canadian agricultural sector come at the expense of the SAWs (Hennebry, 2006). The structure of SAWP and its policies are formulated by the government in ways that produce social inequalities for the SAWs, making them vulnerable to exploitation (Basok, 2002; Hennebry, 2006).

In other words, there is a direct relationship between the government and the social inequalities and powerlessness of the SAWs through the SAWP. For example, under SAWP, a worker is usually legally required to work for a single specified employer, or the worker will be deported back to their origin country and lose the earning opportunity in Canada (Basok, 2007). So, due to the fear of losing employment, the workers may not take sick days and may agree to work seven days a week or not complain about safety conditions (Basok, 2002). Another structural component that makes SAWs vulnerable is the lack of full rights such as the right to unionize or participate in demonstrations and receive benefits from social security programs (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). Hence, the government tilts the power in favor of the domestic (employers, workers, farms, owners, etc.) at the cost of the SAWs, making them vulnerable to exclusion and unequal treatment in society.

Consequently, the SAWs issue is a case where social inequalities and power imbalance are legitimated and sustained by the government and its institutions (Hennebry, 2006; Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). As a result, the issue can be conceptualized using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the theory of governmentality. Combined, they provide a valuable analytical model because they conceptualize social power dynamics and the connection to discourse as a means to reproduce power and maintain status quos (Willig, 2014; Foucault, 1979). In CDA, the approach consists of critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways discourse constructs, maintains, and legitimizes social inequalities (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). It is important to emphasize that discourse is central to CDA. Discourse comprises of any medium that expresses ways of knowing, experiencing, and valuing the world and it can take many forms such as policy texts, narratives, conversations, speeches, and visual images (McGregor, 2004; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). These mediums of discourse are an important part of social process and provide ways to maintain power and status quos (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In addition to discourse being related to CDA, it is also related to the theory of governmentality. Governmentality is state regulation of social conduct by exercising power (through a network of institutions, practices, procedures, and techniques), which is reflected in and supported by discourse (Foucault, 1979). It emphasizes the ways in which states regulate social conduct and produce subtle methods of power, which can be exercised through a network of institutions, practices, procedures, and techniques (Foucault, 1979). Among government discourses, news releases are an easily accessible source because they are available to everyone via the web. The government uses news releases to communicate important

events or developments to the public (Maleková, 2013). News releases provide an understanding of the relationship between government and society through elements of discourse (Xion, 2015). Therefore, in this thesis, I examine government news releases to understand how the social-political issue of the SAWs is framed within the context of existing agricultural challenges in Canada.

Research problem

The purpose of my thesis is to understand how government discourse, as presented in government agricultural news releases, produces or reproduces social inequalities for SAWs and helps to maintain the status quo. Specifically, I apply CDA to publicly available governmental news releases from the Government of Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture (GNSDOA) and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). GNSDOA is a provincial institution in Nova Scotia that supports agriculture and develops programs, services, and policies to help farming communities be more competitive, sustainable, and profitable (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021). Similarly, OMAFRA is a provincial institution in Ontario committed to the success of Ontario's rural communities and its food and agriculture sectors by supporting the province's agri-food sector, enforcing and improving food safety, and strengthening Ontario's rural communities (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2016). As I analyze news releases from these government institutions, I am guided by the question – how do government news releases construct, maintain, and legitimize the social inequalities and the status quo concerning SAWs? In alignment with the CDA approach (Van Dijk, 1993),

my goal is to contribute to a richer understanding of the SAWs issue rather than attempt to solve the entire issue.

Importance of the study

The issue of SAWs is complex, and thus it is necessary to understand the issue from multiple angles. So, several studies have tackled the issue by focusing on the experiences of SAWs, challenges faced by farmers, expectations of consumers, perspectives of social-justice advocates, and policy debates from scholars. However, there has been a limited number of studies on government institutions in relation to SAWs. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on the role of government institutions and the implications of their news releases on SAWs and the SAWP. This study uniquely brings agriculture, government institutions, and news releases into the equation of the SAWs. By doing so, the study adds to existing knowledge and understanding of the issue. Hence, it brings us a step closer to solving the complex SAW issue.

Position of the researcher

CDA encourages researchers to identify and engage explicitly with their positionality throughout the research process (Johnson & McLean, 2020). This allows the researcher to use their experiences and perspectives to critically understand the social issue (Van Dijk, 1993). Therefore, I outline my positionality and related experience in this section.

I migrated to Canada as an international student to pursue my undergraduate degree. After completion, I applied for a temporary work permit under the Temporary

Foreign Workers program and worked in Canada as a temporary worker for five years. I am, therefore, familiar with the challenges of living and working abroad as a migrant.

While my experience was generally positive, I am motivated by the fact that migrants in other foreign worker programs in Canada face significant challenges. Additionally, I have also had an opportunity to work in the Canadian public sector, so I am aware, to some extent, of the potential and limitations of government institutions in positively impacting a social problem. In this research, I use these experiences to critically analyze the research problem.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, I articulated the research problem of the thesis and introduced related topics. Particularly, I outlined issues related to SAWs, the SAWP, and agriculture in Canada. Now, in this chapter, I discuss these topics in detail and articulate their connections with each other by addressing questions such as: Why do SAWs not have equal footing in society? Why is the SAWP the way it is? What is the relationship between agricultural issues, SAWs, and the SAWP? I address these questions through a review of established literature. By doing so, I situate the research problem within the existing scholarship.

I begin my literature review with the agricultural sector in Canada because it provides a holistic historical context needed to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. With the review of the agricultural sector, I establish that issues related to SAWs and the SAWP stem from inherent challenges in the Canadian agricultural sector, mainly a “cost-price squeeze” where rising input costs are not offset by increases in revenue, and a labour shortage. Emphasizing labour shortage, I then review the literature on the benefit-cost analysis of the SAWs and the SAWP, shedding light on issues related to power imbalance and social inequalities.

The agricultural sector in Canada and its challenges

In this section, I conduct a literature review of the structural components of the agricultural sector in Canada. I provide a deeper understanding of the sector by analyzing challenges within the sector. Then, I look at the government's response to those

challenges and establish how SAWs have become part and parcel of the agricultural sector.

Agriculture has proven to be a vital sector in the Canadian economy, despite facing tough limitations. In 2020, the Canadian agricultural sector employed 250,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2021). The agriculture sector combined with the agri-food system employed 2.1 million people and accounted for 7.4% of Canada's gross domestic product in 2020 (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2021). That same year, Canada was the fifth-largest exporter of agriculture and agri-food products in the world, with exports to over 200 countries (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2021). The agricultural sector in Canada produces a wide variety of grain, livestock, and commodities to supply the much larger food production and processing industries (Statistics Canada, 2021). For example, some of the common agricultural products are canola, beef products, vegetables, and poultry (Statistics Canada, 2017). Canada produces all of this despite the fact that only 6.9% of land can be farmed in Canada, mainly because of the soil quality and the nature of the climate and terrain, so the rest of the agricultural land is used to ranch cattle (Statistics Canada, 2014). Canada also has aquaculture operations in the coastal regions, and it has greenhouse operations in the urban centers for vegetables and flowers production (Hein, 2020). Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (2021) reports that agricultural production varies by province. They report that most crop farming takes place in the Prairie provinces i.e., Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. They also show that farmers in British Columbia produce large amounts of fruit, vegetables, aquaculture products, eggs, and poultry meat. Additionally, Ontario has the most poultry farms of any province and produces the most corn and apples in Canada whereas Quebec is the largest

producer of blueberries and has the largest number of dairy farms and cows. In Atlantic Canada, farming is split equally between crops and livestock, including aquaculture (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2021).

A key challenge in the agricultural sector is the decreasing number of farms due to farm consolidations. According to Lerohl and Unterschultz (2000), the agricultural sector is under tremendous pressure to achieve economies of scale, so farms are consolidating to achieve larger operations. Qualman and Tait (2004) argue that global competition, facilitated by free trade, is at the root of this pressure in agriculture. They explain, free trade policies and investment agreements between nations have torn down economic barriers, putting all the world's farmers into a single hyper-competitive market. Trade agreements such as General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization, have set the stage for large supermarket chains to extend globally and consolidate their market share so these large retailers now exert market power over food producers (Busch and Bains 2004). For example, in Canada, the food retail market is highly concentrated, with the top six retailers controlling more than 80% of retail food sales (Janoff 2001). So, to supply the retailers at competitive rates, farmers have to compete on a global scale for farm inputs, technology, and labour (Preibisch, 2007). Lerohl and Unterschultz (2000), argue that farmers are reacting by adopting new farming technology and enhancing the abilities of the farm operators to deal with new technology. The authors state that on one hand, the new technology in farming is capital intensive and requires large farm sizes to be economical. On the other hand, farmers' educational attainment has increased, giving them the ability to work with advanced farming technology. These are additional trends driving the economies of scale in agriculture. As a

result, farms are expanding their business by buying up additional farms, so the size of farms is increasing while the number of farms is decreasing (Lerohl and Unterschultz, 2000). Specifically, there were 193,492 farms in 2016, down 5.9% from 2011, but the average area per farm increased from 779 acres in 2011 to an average of 820 acres in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). Furthermore, according to Ferguson (2007), input costs such as fuel, seeds, and fertilizer costs are increasing globally. He adds the rising costs are simply not offset by a similar increase in profits, so the growers are experiencing a “cost-price squeeze”. Therefore, farms are under tremendous pressure to enlarge operations and convert to cost-saving technology by consolidating farms and increasing capital intensiveness in the sector (Ferguson, 2007).

These challenges in agriculture impact capital and labour requirements in the agricultural sector in Canada. First, the financial needs of the sector have grown (Lerohl and Unterschultz, 2000). So, the agricultural sector in Canada has become more reliant on government funding in recent years. In the last three years, the dollar value of the total government-funded programs in agriculture increased from \$2.8 billion in 2019 to \$3.2 billion in 2020 and then to \$5.6 billion in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022). The funding partly increased due to the COVID-19 related program but most of the funding went to other agricultural programs supporting innovation, farming, business development, etc. (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2021). The agricultural sector, according to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (2021), receives federal and provincial funding under a framework called the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP). They elaborate, the CAP framework has earmarked \$3 billion over five years, from 2018 to 2023, and aims to provide simplified and streamlined services to help farms manage significant risks that

threaten the viability of their operations. Through the CAP, farmers can access funds to support agricultural research, help them use new technologies, reduce their environmental impact and maintain food safety (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2021). Due to the cost-price squeeze, the agricultural sector can no longer rely on traditional sources of business financing, such as private family capital or debt financing, and therefore, they need support through government funding (Ferguson, 2007; Lerohl and Unterschultz, 2000). Second, on top of declining farm incomes, the agricultural sector in Canada is facing a labour shortage. The sector is simply not able to stretch its budgets to increase wages to attract more labour. An increasing labour shortage makes labour one of the key challenges in the agricultural sector (Burt and Meyer-Robinson, 2016). I will focus remaining of the chapter on this issue due to its importance and relevance to the research problem.

There are several complex reasons for the labour shortage. One of the reasons for labour shortage is large seasonal fluctuations in demand for workers in the agricultural sector compared to other industries; for example, the agricultural sector employs 30% (approximately 100,000) more workers during the high season than during the low season (Zhang, Ostrovsky & Arsenault, 2021). Furthermore, seasonal fluctuations in employment are even larger in crop production, as crop production experiences short periods of high demand for workers followed by prolonged periods of low demand (Burt and Meyer-Robinson, 2016). Beyond seasonality, there are other factors that make it unusually difficult to fill the labour gap. Agriculture generally requires long work hours and is physically demanding in nature; the average hours of work in the agricultural sector were 42.6 hours per week compared with an average of 35.3 hours for all sectors

(Statistics Canada, 2022). The longer hours worked in the sector are partly attributable to the labour shortage it is experiencing. According to the survey by Michael Burt and Meyer-Robinson (2016), many farm operators reported that overtime, fatigue, and stress for existing workers were major outcomes of labour shortages. The survey indicates long hours appear to be both, a result and a contributor to the labour shortages in agriculture. The survey explains, workers have to work long hours because of the insufficient number of labourers on farms, which disincentivizes new workers from entering the agricultural labour workforce. In addition, the survey indicates that 40% of employers cited that the physicality of work is a challenge to retaining workers because farm work requires physical labour, which is difficult to sustain long term. Moreover, the survey indicates that the average wage gap between agriculture and other industries was 25% in 2016 so fewer domestic workers are willing to work in agriculture. Lastly, the survey shows that labour shortage is also caused by an aging population in rural areas and by the remoteness of agricultural work from urban centers. This is because the people who live in urban areas are often not willing or able to travel to rural locations where agricultural work is located (Burt and Meyer-Robinson, 2016). Many farm operators report that they receive no applicants when they advertise job openings (Zhang et al., 2021).

The lack of domestic workers and heavy reliance on foreign SAWs begs the question regarding the extent to which labour shortages are socially created. SAWs fill jobs that are less secure, are more poorly paid, and have been rejected by domestic workers (Bohning, 1984; Sharma, 2006). In other words, labour shortages are not always the absence of labour but the unwillingness of domestic workers to accept the working conditions and wage level offered. Many still associate working on farms with “three

Ds’’: dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs (Ferguson, 2007), and characterize it as unskilled, despite recent innovations and skills required to perform the farm work. The domestic workers have self-selected themselves out of farm work and the labour gap is left to be filled by SAWs (Ferguson, 2007). Therefore, SAWs have become a key feature of the agricultural sector in Canada.

Seasonal Agricultural Workers

In this section, I emphasize the importance of the SAWs. I do so by presenting the origin story of the SAWP along with recent developments in the program. I also touch on the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in accentuating the labour shortage in agriculture, which led to the need for more SAWs.

The SAWP, and thus SAWs in Canada, was born as a federal government response to the labour shortage in agriculture. It falls under the umbrella of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022). Temporary foreign workers fill temporary labour needs that cannot be met locally. According to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2020), TFWP requires a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA), which ensures that Canadians and permanent residents have the first chance for job opportunities. The organization outlines that a foreign worker receives a positive LMIA, once the employer is able to provide proof of inability to obtain domestic workers and only then, the foreign worker can apply for a work permit. The SAWP was designed specifically for the agricultural sector and most workers under this program are considered low-skilled workers (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020). This shows that

generally agricultural work is considered a low-skill profession. As a result, agricultural work becomes associated with the “three Ds” in society (Ferguson, 2007). This further makes the agricultural sector unattractive to domestic workers, widening the labour gap in agriculture.

The SAWP originated in the early 1960s during the harvesting season when Ontario had an intense and continuous lack of farm workers (Basok, 2007). This led to farmers in Ontario petitioning the Canadian government to help them hire foreign agricultural labour (Basok, 2007). Under this pressure, the Canadian government established Memoranda of Understanding in the mid-1960s with the Commonwealth Caribbean countries and Mexico because the Memoranda of Understanding allowed Canadian farmers to hire temporary agricultural workers from those countries (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). In the months following the Memoranda, Ontario farms successfully hired 264 Jamaican workers to work under the SAWP (Action Canada, 2018). Notably, the SAWP is available only to citizens from Mexico or participating Caribbean countries that have signed bilateral memorandums of understanding with Canada. Some of the participating Caribbean countries are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago. In the SAWP, the SAWs hired must work in specific commodity sectors (such as greenhouse, cattle ranching, poultry, meat production, etc.) and their activities must be related to farm work (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022). Generally, employers can hire SAWs from participating countries for a maximum of 8 months, between January 1 and December 15,

provided they are able to offer the workers a minimum of 240 hours of work (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022).

For the 2022 SAWP season, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, work permits under the SAWP indicate a 9-month work duration to accommodate the quarantine period (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, 2021). Furthermore, in terms of the recent development in the SAWP, the Canadian government launched the 3-year Agri-Food Pilot in May of 2020 to help address labour shortages due to the COVID-19 outbreak (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, 2021). The Agri-Food Pilot, according to the Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (2021), is a new initiative that aims to attract and retain experienced workers in mushroom and greenhouse crop production, meat processing, and livestock raising industries, by providing them with opportunities to become permanent residents. The organization estimated that the program would bring about 16,500 new permanent residents, including both workers and their family members. Therefore, some SAWs have a pathway for permanent residency through this pilot, while other SAWs would continue to be recruited through temporary work permits.

The Agri-Food Pilot, a partial result of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the important role of the SAWs in supplementing the labour force in the agricultural sector. The federal government responded to several jurisdictions reporting chronic and significant labour shortages in the agriculture sector during the COVID-19 pandemic (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, 2021). As a result, the federal government deemed SAWs essential and put measures for their prompt arrival to Canada during the pandemic. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in early 2020,

unemployment in Canada jumped from 5.6% to 13.7% between February and May of 2020 (Larue, 2021), further accentuating the need for the SAWs. It revealed potential risks to the agricultural labour supply and the vulnerabilities of SAWs to the pandemic. A recent study confirms that the timing of the pandemic coincided with the highest demand for SAWs (Lu 2020). Moreover, the surge in unemployment in Spring 2020 was not expected to bring many domestic workers to the fields because many laid-off workers had the option of receiving Canada Emergency Response Benefit payments from the government rather than looking for employment (Larue, 2021). As a result, there was a higher need for SAWs during this period. Therefore, the Agri-Food Pilot program and the pandemic have led to an interesting development in the SAWP since its inception and they have further highlighted the importance of the SAWs.

Analysis of the SAWP

In this section, I conduct a benefit and cost analysis of the SAWP. I demonstrate that the Canadian agricultural sector benefits from the SAWP in an unsustainable manner. These benefits come at the cost of the SAWs. Here, I focus on the cost side of the analysis. I analyze inequalities faced by SAWs, establish the power dynamic within the program, and outline key players in the broader agricultural sector.

Benefits of the SAWP

Canada's SAWP has been cited as a model program for managing temporary foreign workers compared to similar programs hosted by other countries. Numerous countries, such as the United States, Turkey, and Spain, have looked to Canada for best practices in managing their temporary workers (Binford et. al, 2006). Furthermore, the

International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2000), the World Bank (2006), and the Organization of American States (Summit of Americas, 2000) have praised Canada's SAWP for using innovative and sustainable recruitment methods. Even scholars critical of several aspects of the program, such as Basok (2000), Binford et. al (2006), and Hennebry & Preibisch (2010), agree that Canadian SAWP is comparatively a better model than others. The SAWP is considered a win-win by some scholars due to its formal structure and workers' rights being outlined and enforced through agreements, memoranda of understanding, and operations guidelines between the host country and origin country (Basok, 2007), despite the formal structure creating a top-down approach of power (arranging decisions to flow from the government to the SAWs) and only limited workers rights being given to the SAWs (Hennebry, 2006). Nevertheless, the formal structure benefits the host country due to the program's potential in mitigating labour shortages and stimulating local food production (Basok, 2007).

From the perspective of the host country, the program is theoretically beneficial because it intends to reduce the labour shortage. The program operates on a demand-supply basis, without quotas and caps, where agricultural producers are able to hire foreign seasonal workers without limit (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). Once an employer is able to prove that they could not find domestic workers to fill the jobs they are offering, the government supplies the employers with the required workers through SAWP. Moreover, after the first assessment, approval for temporary workers in subsequent years is labeled as an "occupation under pressure" and they do not even have to demonstrate they made attempts to hire Canadian workers (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). For example, from 2007–2009, agricultural employers designated as an

“occupation under pressure” did not even have to demonstrate they made attempts to hire Canadian workers. In reality, the SAWP has become a band-aid solution for farmers in the host country. The intention to reduce the labour shortage has not exactly come to fruition. I further discuss this in the “Costs to SAWs” section of this chapter.

In addition, the program provides reliable and experienced workers, as seasonal workers have returned year after year to work under the same program (Binford et. al, 2006). According to Hennebry and Preibisch (2010), one of the reasons behind their return is the high degree of collaboration between the host country and the worker country, which allows for good administrative support to the workers in the program. The authors explain, worker countries have a high degree of involvement in the operational aspects. The authors add that these countries are eager to capture worker remittances and ease unemployment at home, so they invest significant resources in the recruitment and selection of workers. Other aspects of the program’s administration are undertaken by employer-driven organizations that charge a user fee per worker to employers accessing the program (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). Although this reliability is a source of security for employers, it incentivizes employers to develop growing reliance on SAWs and to make investments based on the continuous presence of SAWs (Ferguson, 2007). Therefore, the benefit is double-edged.

Furthermore, the host country benefits from a limited period of the work permit of the SAWs and limited rights (Basok, 2000; Hennebry 2006). According to Basok (2000), a benefit of the SAWP is that SAWs return to their home country once their employment contract ends in Canada. She argues, in other countries, temporary worker programs have struggled with the issue of the worker not returning home, thus inflating the number of

undocumented workers in their country. She adds, such an issue of non-return is rare in the Canadian SAWP because Canadian SAWs return home after their work term due to Canada's guest worker recruitment policies, enforcement of employment, housing-related minimum standards, and the size of the program. Therefore, she explains that whether guest workers return or stay in the host country illegally largely depends on the way the program is administered. She also states that the program is shaped in such a way that it serves the government's objective of preventing unwanted immigrants from staying in Canada, thereby protecting domestic labour. Hence, she concludes, the potential to meet the labour gap, the high degree of reliability of workers, and the return of workers to their home country position Canadian SAWP as an attractive model to the agricultural sector in Canada.

Lastly, Preibisch (2007) states, the benefit to the host country is that it allows farm operators to be competitive in domestic and export markets. She argues that the SAWP has become necessary to remain competitive as farm operators face serious competition in the global market. Free trade policies and investment agreements between nations have removed economic barriers and put all the world's farmers into a single hyper-competitive market (Qualman & Tait, 2004). Preibisch (2007) argues that Canada's principal competitor is the United States and the country's agricultural sector relies heavily on the use of immigrants or unauthorized workers. To compete with this, the farm operators need to have flexible labour arrangements through the SAWP. So, the structure of the program provides farm operators with an easy approval process for requesting SAWs, an ability to request specific SAWs (based on sex, race, and nationality), and bargaining power over SAWs. (Preibisch, 2010; Hennebry 2006).

The SAWP model also benefits worker countries to some extent. SAWs abroad are sources of remittance to their home countries and the families in the home countries use remittances to improve their living standards (Binford et. al, 2006). In addition, the cost of running the program for the worker country is low because the host country provides for SAWs' transportation, food, and lodging (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). It is worth noting, however, while the remittances support the worker country and families financially, the absence of fathers/mothers creates a negative social impact on them (McLaughlin et al., 2017). In their absence, many children grow up in a single parent household and do not experience the security that an intact family would have provided (McLaughlin et al., 2017). So, while the worker countries benefit economically, the families suffer as a parent is away to work in Canada.

Therefore, the benefits analysis above demonstrates the power dynamic within the SAWP. It is apparent that SAWP mostly benefits the host country and the domestic group associated with it such as farm operators, farm owners, employers, etc. Despite the benefits being double-edged, it is clear that the program does provide bargaining power to the domestic group over SAWs. Next, I elaborate on paradoxes associated with these benefits. I also demonstrate the costs to SAWs of the program.

Costs to SAWs

In terms of costs, researchers argue that SAWs have, paradoxically, become a permanent feature of the agricultural sector in Canada, despite the program's origin as a stop-gap measure to solve a temporary labour shortage, for example, some workers have returned to the same region in Ontario for the past 20 years (Basok, 2007). While this relative stability might be a source of security for the workers and the employers, it is

also a risk: employers develop growing reliance on SAWs, employers make investments based on their continued presence, working conditions stagnate and innovations in cost-saving technology may not occur (Ferguson, 2007). However, the main critique of the SAWP is that benefits to the host and the worker country come at the expense of the SAWs themselves, due to unequal treatment and power imbalance within the SAWP. Vosko (2018) argues that the SAWP makes the SAWs vulnerable due to the “legal but deportable” nature of their work permit as SAWs in Canada are legally tied to a single employer (on rare occasions, they are tied to two employers) and must work for this specified employer. This produces inequality as these workers are bound to the economic relationship with their employer to maintain their legal status in Canada, however exploitative, abusive, or positive that relationship may be (Basok, 2007). For example, at the fear of losing employment and legal status, the workers may forgo sick days or worker's compensation when injured, may agree to work seven days a week, and not complain about safety conditions (Basok, 2007). The farm employers in such a contract can terminate and deport the worker if the worker refuses to work or if the employer is not satisfied with the worker (Hennebry, 2006). Therefore, there is a power imbalance in this situation where the domestic farm employers and governmental structure have the upper hand over the SAWs.

That said, SAWs have not always accepted the vulnerability of their position without complaint. Cohen & Hjalmarson, (2020) have shown the ways in which the SAWs engage in small-scale resistance using what the authors call the “weapons of the weak”. Here, resistance is defined as small scale and subtle negotiation of circumstances to fight legislated inequality, for example working under the table, collective work pacing

(maintaining lower than capacity pace), falsifying hours on timesheets, and re-appropriation of farm produce. In addition to subtle resistance, Basok and Belanger (2016) give instances where SAWs have directly shown resistance, such as in 2010 when over 150 SAWs participated in a march organized by a grassroots organization called Justicia for Migrant Workers calling for a pathway to permanent residency, an end to repatriation and deportation, labour law reform and equal access to social entitlement. Scholars have supported similar calls to action. For instance, to overcome the “legal but deportable” nature of the workers, Vosko (2018) recommends setting limits on the premature cessation of employment, giving the workers ability to change employers, and monitoring the readmission process such as recruitment and employer evaluations more closely. This way the SAWs have attempted to voice themselves and remedy the power imbalance that exists within the agricultural sector.

Until recently there was no clear pathway to permanent status for SAWs. As detailed in the previous section of this chapter, the federal government began Agri-Food pilot program that would provide SAWs and their family a path to permanent residency in May 2020. One of the reasons it took a long time for the government to address this issue is the SAWs’ lack of social and political rights. Gabriel and MacDonald (2011) argue that it is difficult for the SAWs to organize because of their legal status and lack of recognition of associational rights in Canada. SAWs had no influence in changing the terms and conditions of their employment through electoral channels. The authors state that permanent residency is associated with a range of social and political rights that are otherwise not available to the temporary SAWs. The authors recommend a permanent residency pathway as a solution to improving the workers' rights and conditions in the

SAWP. However, despite the recent pathway to permanency, there will still be many SAWs that will continue to work on a temporary basis (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021). This is because the permanent residency pathway for SAWs has an annual application limit so, only a limited number of experience SAWs will be able to apply for permanent residency in Canada (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021). However, although recent data on the transition to permanent residency is not yet available, historically a study by Zhang, Ostrovsky, and Arsenault (2020) shows that the permanent residency amount of the SAWs was considerably lower. This could be due to somewhat tough eligibility criteria for permanent residency. To be eligible to qualify for permanent residency, a SAW must obtain an offer for a full-time, non seasonal, and permanent position (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021). Such job offers are still uncommon in the agricultural sector. Thus, it appears that the issue associated with the temporary nature of the SAWP will continue.

Similarly, the issue of permanency gives rise to the precarious status of SAWs. According to Goldring (2010), SAWs have “less than full legal status”. This means they do not have full rights that are normally associated with permanent residence and citizenship in Canada. For example, the workers do not have the right to unionize or participate in demonstrations. Furthermore, the workers are unable to benefit from social security programs such as Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan, despite contributing to them (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). The restricted rights place SAWs in a disadvantaged position in the labour market. In addition, SAWs are precarious, in that the farm operators are able to implement a range of employment practices and discrimination that would not be possible with a domestic workforce (Hennebry and

Preibisch, 2010). For example, the SAWP employers can specify the sex, race, and nationality of the workers they want to hire, and employers can switch supply countries if they are dissatisfied with the performance of workers (Hennebry, 2006). Employers being able to pick their workers from a global labor pool against any single country gives them bargaining power while making SAWs more precarious (Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). This is particularly the case in Mexico, where remittances make important contributions to the country's economies and household subsistence and income diversification strategies (Massey et al., 1994; McLaughlin et al., 2017). Therefore, the precariousness of the SAWs produces inequality and powerlessness as a result of the formal structure of the SAWP.

The inequality and power imbalance within the program beg the question of whether the SAWP should be reformed or completely abolished. Binford (2019) argues that the program should be abolished. The author points out that reform attempts, such as collective bargaining, have not worked. For example, despite the existence of collective bargaining in British Columbia, the workers were unable to make grievances upon wrongful termination as unionized SAWP employees were repatriated before they were able to apply for grievance application (Vosko, 2013). According to Binford (2006), SAWP is best conceived as a poverty alleviation rather than a development program because there is a limited productive effect of migrant remittance on economic development. The majority of the workers report that their investment is a complement to seasonal agricultural work rather than a substitute and most of their earnings go into the improvement of basic necessities such as nutrition, clothing, and housing hence limiting the upward economic mobility of the workers. In contrast, Otero (2019) argues for a

pathway to permanent residency upon arrival for the workers rather than total abolition. The recent progress in the policy is leaning more toward providing a permanent residency pathway. Instead of eliminating it, the author suggests transforming the program where the workers are given permanent residence so that they can circulate freely in the market, migrate with their families, and have the right to unionize. The author's rationale behind this is that Canada has a strong structural need for SAWs as the population growth of the country is low and SAWs have become a permanent feature of the agricultural industry. He also argues that permanent residency for these workers will help tremendously in resolving most of the labour rights issues associated with SAWP.

The complexity within this debate is that once SAWs become permanent residents, they become part of the domestic social group, which are more likely to leave the "three Ds": dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs (Ferguson, 2007). This means, although the members within the social groups change, the dynamic within those groups may not change. As established by scholars, inequalities and power imbalance are produced through the formal structure constructed by the government (Basok, 2007; Hennebry, 2006, 2010; Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010; Massey et al., 1994). In other words, the socio-political framework of government has created the power dynamic and inequalities in the first place. Hence, to understand the SAWs issue, it is important to understand to what degree, and in what ways the governmental institutions in agriculture continue to propagate inequalities and maintain power imbalances in relation to SAWs. Currently, there is a gap in the literature in this area, so my goal is to fill this gap and contribute to a better understanding of the SAWs issue.

In conclusion, this chapter detailed two main challenges of the agricultural sector in Canada. First, the number of farms is decreasing due to farm consolidations. Canadian farms are experiencing a cost-price squeeze. Due to this reason, the farms are under tremendous pressure to achieve economies of scale by consolidating. Second, the agricultural sector is facing persistent labour shortages. The labour shortages in Canada are mainly due to the absence of domestic workers interested in the agricultural sector. Domestic workers are disinterested because jobs in agriculture are associated with the stigma of “three Ds”: dirty, dangerous, and difficult. So, the domestic workers have self-selected themselves out of the agricultural sector. The labour gap created by the domestic workers is filled by SAWs. SAWs are the supplementary labour force in Canada. They temporarily migrate to Canada through the SAWP. The SAWP is a governmental program created specifically to address agricultural labour shortages in Canada. So far, the program has benefited the Canadian agricultural sector by providing on-demand cheap labour. However, the benefit comes at the cost of SAWs. The structure of the SAWP program, implemented by the government, generates inequalities and exploitations of SAWs. Primarily, the structure creates a power imbalance between two social groups: the domestic and the SAW group. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of governmental structure in producing power imbalance and social inequalities for SAWs. Currently, there is a gap in literature understanding this aspect of the SAWs issue. This study aims to fill the gap by using existing knowledge in the literature and by conducting a study on government news releases. Next, I discuss the rationale behind using government discourse and present supporting theories.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYTICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I define and explain the analytical and theoretical framework used to analyze the research problem: how do government news releases construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities and the status quo for SAWs? I use critical discourse analysis (CDA) as my main analytical framework. I further support the CDA framework using theories of discourse and silences. Then, I use the theory of governmentality and the genre of institutional press releases within it to show the importance of government discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis

I primarily use CDA to investigate the research problem. CDA is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourse constructs, maintains, and legitimates social inequalities (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Mullet, 2018). CDA emphasizes the role of language as a power resource and explores the ways in which language creates and facilitates social and psychological phenomena (Willig, 2014). The key emphasis here is on understanding social issues through language. Fairclough (2003) views language as an irreducible element of social life and describes social life as “inter-connected networks of social practices”. He argues that social practices, formed through the articulation of action, interaction, social relations, and beliefs, are dialectically connected. This implies that analysis of language use is essential in understanding a particular social issue.

CDA also focuses on understanding social power between social groups. Habermas (1967) defines CDA as “being fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control when these are manifested in language”. CDA attempts to uncover hidden power relations and ideologies by systematically investigating the social consequences of the discourse (Johnson & McLean, 2020). A crucial presupposition is, the understanding of the social power and dominance that has been gained through privileged access to socially valued resources, allows one group to exert control or dominance over another group (Van Dijk, 1993). For instance, the powerful group may limit the freedom and action of others. Power and dominance are usually institutionalized, meaning, social dominance may be legitimated by law and sustained ideologically by social, political, and cultural organizations (Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In other words, institutions act as gatekeepers to discursive resources and unequal access to those resources causes the power imbalance.

The main feature of CDA is that it begins with a research problem, rather than with fixed theoretical positions (Wodak, 2011). This is because studies that examine interrelationships between power, ideology, and discourse are complex and multifaceted (Lazar, 2007). Fairclough (2001) explains that CDA is an approach “which is in a dialogical relationship with other social theories and methods, which should engage with them in a transdisciplinary rather than just interdisciplinary way” (p. 121). In transdisciplinary research approaches, distinctions between theory, description, and application become less relevant (Van Dijk, 1993).

CDA takes an inductive (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and interpretive approach to produce meaning (Fairclough, 2001) through analysis. There is a constant oscillation between the research problem, analysis of the findings, and theory because the goal of the iterative process is to refine the understanding of the social issue through each iteration (Mullet, 2018). In addition, it encourages researchers to practice self-critical reflexivity and engage explicitly with their positionality throughout the research process (Johnson & McLean, 2020). The researcher motivated by pressing social issues aims to bring about change through critical understanding (Van Dijk, 1993). As a result, CDA allows the use of any theory, method, technique, or procedure that is relevant to the research problem (Mullet, 2018).

Discourse

Discourse is central to CDA, as the name itself implies. CDA is derived from several overlapping theoretical perspectives, all of which have discursive or linguistic underpinnings. Some of these perspectives include the poststructuralist discourse theories of Foucault, post structural feminism, the Critical Theory of the pre-World War II Frankfurt School, neo-Marxist cultural theory, critical linguistics, and the “social representation theory” of Moscovici (Luke, 1997; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Thus, CDA is interested particularly in linguistic manifestations of power. According to Van Dijk (1993), power can be exercised through the control of discourse. For example, power can be exercised through properties of syntax, rhetoric, or linguistic surface structures such as tone, hesitation, pauses, and laughter. He argues power can also be exercised by controlling context. In this way, the exercise of power influences knowledge, beliefs, understandings,

ideologies, norms, attitudes, values, and plans. (Van Dijk, 1993). Therefore, discourse can be described as:

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the “nature” of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. (Weedon, 1987, p. 108)

Discourse consists of any medium that expresses ways of knowing, experiencing, and valuing the world, such as talk, text, and media (McGregor, 2004). Discourse can take numerous forms or genres such as policies, narratives, conversations, speeches, visual images, multimedia, and film (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). These mediums of discourse are integral to social processes (Fairclough, 2001) because discourse is a means to sustain power and maintain status quos (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Discourse reproduces power directly through the exercise of dominance in texts and talks in specific contexts; and indirectly through the use of discourse to influence others’ minds (Van Dijk, 1993). Discourse is also used to rationalize inequality by positively representing one’s own group, and negatively representing “others”; for example, through structural emphasis such as the use of “their” for negative actions and “our” for positive actions (Van Dijk, 1993).

Silences

In CDA, determining who or what might be silenced by dominant discourse is as important as exploring elements that are explicitly present in the text (Johnson &

McLean, 2020). Thus, it is necessary to have an awareness of how dominant discourse might exclude or marginalize alternative voices and perspectives (Johnson & McLean, 2020). What we do not say has an equal function in the order of discourse so paying attention to these silences can assist in discovering regimes of truth and revealing unequal power relations (Foucault, 1990).

Silence has a strategic role in discourse, in that, it is an indirect form of communication and a carrier of meaning (Dimitrov, 2018). Silence should not be conceptualized as the opposite of communication because structurally, silence makes communication possible and therefore silence is neither good nor bad (Dimitrov, 2018). Silence, like discourse, can be both an instrument and effect of power where, it can reinforce but also undermine power, ‘loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance’ (Foucault, 1990, p. 101).

In this way, discourse and silences are important elements in the production and reproduction of social power. They are housed under the overarching analytical framework of CDA because CDA provides an insightful social lens through which understanding social groups and deciphering power dynamics within those social groups is possible. Next, I explain the theory of governmentality plus the genre of the institutional press release and articulate their connection to discourse.

Governmentality

Governmentality, often defined as the "conduct of conduct", is the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means (Murray Li, 2007). Originally theorized by Foucault (1979), governmentality emphasizes the ways in which societies and states

produce subtle methods of power to regulate social conduct. He states, power can be exercised through a network of institutions, practices, procedures, and techniques. His main argument is that the underlying rationale behind governmentality is to strengthen the power of the state by enhancing the productivity of the population. He further adds that the government is a vast and never-ending project of improvement, and its implementation requires both shaping the personal conduct of individuals and regulating social and economic structures so that they enhance the wellbeing of the population. Hence, the main purpose of the government is to secure the welfare of the population (Foucault, 1991) through institutional networks (Foucault, 1979). To achieve the wellbeing of the level of population, the government functions by educating desires and encouraging habits, aspirations, and beliefs since it is not possible to coerce every individual to regulate their actions (Murray Li, 2007). It artificially sets conditions and socially controls the population to choose certain options while giving them the illusion of following their own self-interest (Murray Li, 2007). In addition, Foucault (1980) articulates power with truth using his argument that truth is a product of power and knowledge. Truth is a type of discourse that is accepted by society (Gordan, 1980). Similarly, governmentality is about how government institutions behave and about the “discursive framework that renders their practices meaningful through the construction of particular subjects of governance” (Joseph, 2010, p. 223). Here discursive framework means the use of discourse or language. Rose (1999) connects the role of language in governmentality as a fundamental part of the government. He argues that language, a component of discourse, does more than merely describe government actions, it also

makes them possible. In this way, governmentality is associated with discourse and stems from Foucauldian ideas that are characteristic of CDA, discourse, and silences.

The Genre of Institutional Press Release

The government press release can be categorized under the genre of the institutional press release. The function of the institutional press release genre is informative and promotional (Maleková, 2013). In other words, this genre is used to communicate news through an organization relating to a specific event or development and promote functions aimed at serving the public relations needs of the organization while generating a positive image of itself. This function of institutional press release connects back to Foucault's (1979) argument that the main purpose of the government is to secure the wellbeing of its population. Institutions' press releases produce discourse such as text and speech to communicate with their desired groups. Government discourse, for example, uses news releases to communicate to its community members about ongoing progress on issues or events (Xion, 2015). Specifically, government news releases break the boundaries between government and society through dialect, information, network technology application, and information integration to help the public quickly acquire government information and services via governmental websites (Xion, 2015). Communication in this case produces knowledge, which is the source of power (Foucault, 1980). In addition, Van Dijk (1993) argues that power is created by unique access to discourse. The implication of this argument on the government discourse is - because the government discourse is the producer of discourse it has unique access to discourse and therefore creates power for its institutions. Therefore, government discourse is grounded within the theory of governmentality. It contains important insights

into the social groups and the power dynamic within the society. Since the SAWs issue consists of a need to understand these very topics, the government discourse and theory of governmentality with the overarching analytical framework of CDA is highly relevant to this thesis.

In conclusion, this chapter discusses CDA and governmentality as key concepts for analyzing the research problem. CDA emphasizes the role of discourse in understanding power relations between social groups. This is because power can be exercised through control of discourse. Discourse, meaning the use of language, can take many forms such as talk and text. However, discourse can also take the form of silence or omission. Additionally, discourse is also related to the theory of governmentality. In the context of the thesis, governmentality is the regulation of social conduct by the exercise of power through government discourse. Therefore, the discourse in news releases produced by governmental institutions reflects the power relations in society. So, analyzing governmental news releases related to the agricultural sector would provide insights into the power exercised by the government and the power dynamics within social groups in agriculture. Next, I present CDA as the methodological approach for analyzing the governmental discourse of news releases.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

As established in previous chapters, this study aims to contribute to a richer understanding of the SAWs issue in Canada. The study attempts to provide interpretative explanations for the ways governmental institutions as a part of the governmental framework, produce or reproduce power and social inequality for SAWs in the agricultural sector in Canada. So, I explore and analyze the government discourse of news releases in agriculture to interpret knowledge, establish relationships among the social group and investigate the power dynamic within those groups. I do so by using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the methodology of this study. In this chapter, I explain step by step application of the CDA methodology along with corresponding findings from the analysis of the governmental news releases.

Approach to CDA

CDA constitutes both a theoretical framework and a methodological approach. CDA helps situate the research problem within the social context (Wodak, 2011). As established in the previous chapter, as a theoretical framework, CDA provides a social lens through which systematic power dynamics within the discourse can be viewed (Van Dijk, 1993). In the context of this study, CDA grounds the research problem in terms of social issues faced by SAWs and the agricultural sector at large. As a methodological approach, CDA provides tools to apply and analyze the theory (Johnson & McLean, 2020). Therefore, it allows systematic investigation of hidden power relations and social

and material consequences of discourse. Since the purpose of the thesis is to analyze this very phenomenon, CDA lends itself very well to investigating the SAWs issue.

CDA begins with a research problem, rather than with fixed theoretical or methodological positions and encourages researchers to practice self-critical reflexivity throughout the research process (Wodak, 2011). The key characteristics include a focus on social problems, an emphasis on language, the view that power relations are discursive, and that the discourse analysis process is systematic, interpretive, descriptive, and explanatory (Fairclough, 2001; Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2001). A generic CDA framework incorporates characteristics and processes shared commonly by the network of CDA scholars such as Fairclough, Kress, Leeuwen, Van Dijk, and Wodak (Mullet, 2018). In alignment with these characteristics and the research problem in this thesis, I have applied a generic analytical framework for CDA. A generic CDA is conducted in seven stages: selecting the discourse, locating data sources, exploring the background of the texts, identifying overarching themes, conducting interdiscursivity, analyzing external relations in the text, and interpreting the data (Mullet, 2018). It is to be noted that instead of seven, I have applied CDA in six stages. I have excluded interdiscursivity, a stage consisting of analyzing external relations in the texts. Interdiscursivity consists of locating two or more texts (usually from different sources or authors), finding ideological positions within those texts, and then analyzing their social implications (Mullet, 2018). I have excluded interdiscursivity analysis due to the limited scope of the study. In the following paragraphs, I explain step by step how I applied CDA in six stages and also present corresponding findings from the analysis of the governmental news releases.

Stage 1 entails selecting a form of discourse related to a social problem. Thus, I selected government news releases from the agricultural sector as the discourse to be used in this study. I selected this form of discourse because there is a close relationship between the governmental agricultural institutions and SAWs through the SAWP, evident from the previous chapters. Also evident is the connection between power and government institutions in social problems like the SAWs issue. Therefore, I began this study with the underlying presupposition that governmental discourse contributes to sustaining or reproducing the inequality within the SAWP and the broader agricultural sector in Canada. This led to the research problem of this thesis - how do government news releases construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities and the status quo in relation to the SAWs?

Stage 2 consists of locating and preparing the data sources. I selected government news releases from the Government of Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture (GNSDOA) and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). I first selected GNSDOA because I wanted to begin by understanding the issue in the province I am located in, i.e. Nova Scotia. I gathered official new releases published online by the GNSDOA from 2019 and 2021. I selected the date range, 2019 to 2021 because it provided a suitable and recent sample size of the news releases. It is to be noted that the selected date range overlaps with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic so the data may be skewed from the norm. I selected news releases from the agriculture department specifically because it was the most relevant department for investigating the research problem. I also did a keyword search, which did not return relevant results. So, the best way to look at the relevant news was to look at all the

releases from the GNSDOA on the Nova Scotia government website. According to the GNSDOA, its mandate is to support the agriculture and agri-business industries that contribute to the economic, environmental, and social prosperity of Nova Scotia (Province of Nova Scotia, 2021), thereby making a good data source for the research. From the GNSDOA website, I sampled 21 news releases to find recurring and important concepts, categories, and themes. To provide rigour to the analysis and to understand the research issue better, I expanded the sample size by selecting news releases from OMAFRA because Ontario has the highest number of SAWs in Canada. I gathered the news release from Ontario by going to the Queen’s Printer for Ontario, the online location for all the communication from the government institutions of Ontario (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2022). From the website, I filtered by the institution most relevant to agriculture and the SAWs – Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. I obtained 189 news releases related to agriculture from OMAFRA while disregarding the news releases completely related to rural affairs and not connected to agriculture. Thus, in total, I had 210 government press releases about agriculture as the sample for this thesis. Table 1 shows the details of the sample size

Table 1: Sample size breakdown

Institution	2019	2020	2021	Row Total
GNSDOA	6	9	6	21
OMAFRA	106	39	44	189
Column Total	112	48	50	210

The sample size breakdown suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly the agricultural sector. Table 1 shows that the press releases published decreased by more than half in 2020 (48 press releases) compared to 2019 (112 press releases). It could be that the reduction in the number of press releases is due to government restrictions imposed during the pandemic, which made the production of press releases difficult. A detailed analysis of the sample size and impact of the pandemic are presented in the findings.

Stage 3 involves exploring the background of the texts. Mainly, it involves an examination of two elements. The first element is examining the social and historical context of the texts. The second element is examining the producer of the texts. I established the social and historical context of the news release by conducting a detailed literature review and by providing a theoretical framework in relation to the SAWs issue. To provide the context of the producer, I examined the intended audience, the purpose of the text, and the characteristics of the publisher. Table 2 shows the context of the news release producer in detail. In this study, two institutions produce the texts i.e., GNSDOA and OMAFRA. The primary audience for both institutions are farmers and members of the agricultural sector, and their goal is to support agricultural growth in their respective provinces. (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021; Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2016). The difference between the institutions is that the OMAFRA is focused on rural issues as well as agricultural issues (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2016). However, the GNSDOA is only focused on agricultural issues (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021).

Table 2: Context of the producer of the news releases

Institution	Intended Audience	Purpose	Publisher Characteristics
GNSDOA	Farmers, community groups, and consumers	Support provincial economic growth in agriculture, promote related Nova Scotia products and communicate legislation and funding opportunities.	A provincial government body in Nova Scotia focused on agriculture.
OMAFRA	Farmers, Ontario residents, rural communities, the agri-food sector	Support provincial agri-food growth, support farmers, and support rural communities	A provincial government body in Ontario focused on agriculture.

Stage 4 consists of identifying and describing overarching themes. I identified themes through a qualitative coding method. After selecting the news releases, I qualitatively coded the press releases and categorized them into themes using an open-source online quantitative analysis tool named Taguette. The tool allowed me to import the press releases into the software, create themes, highlight the required phrases and tag

them. Once all the tagging was complete, I used the export feature of the tool to download the codes and themes into an excel spreadsheet for further analysis. It is important to note that when coding the themes, some texts or phrases were associated with more than one theme. To create consistency while coding, I described each theme and referred to the description while highlighting and tagging them. There were 10 themes in total, and they are outlined in Table 3. The table also presents the theme descriptions along with their representative quotes and phrases from the text to provide a better understanding of the meaning of the themes. Among the themes, I paid particular attention to the labour theme and analyzed it further due to its relevance to the study. Whereas I omitted themes with very low frequency as they were less pertinent to the study. Instead, they are combined under the category called “other”. Individually, these themes are less than 5% of the total, which was the criteria for low frequency. The topics of the other theme are consumer preference, import, export, losses in agriculture, indigenous communities, and youth.

Table 3: Descriptions of themes

Themes	Descriptions	Examples of quotes and phrases
Funding and aid	Money or help from the government	“government is providing \$5 million to support the province's Agricultural and Horticultural Society” “providing risk management programs for farmers”

Themes	Descriptions	Examples of quotes and phrases
Health and safety	Protection and prevention of potential harm or adverse effect on someone	“maintaining or enhancing protections for public health, safety” “during the COVID-19 outbreak”
Labour	Relating to workers, prospective workers, or jobs	“workers with in-demand jobs in the agri-food sector” “creating good middle-class jobs”
Innovation	Technology or process enhancement	“leading-edge technologies, services, and new market-ready products”
Economic growth	Increase in production of goods and services	“drives economic growth in our province”
Local farms and growers	Domestic owners and operators of farms	“provide a source of local food”
Productivity	Increase in efficiency or rate of output	“cut costs and help businesses grow, while maintaining standards”
Environment and climate change	Negative impact on the physical surrounding	“make their operations more environmentally sustainable”

Themes	Descriptions	Examples of quotes and phrases
		“protect the province's natural resources”
Research and awareness	Projects or events related to promoting or improving agriculture	“enhance awareness and adoption of best management practices” “through education and outreach”
Supply chain	Processes involved in the production and distribution of agricultural or related products	“our food supply” “crucial agri-food supply chain”

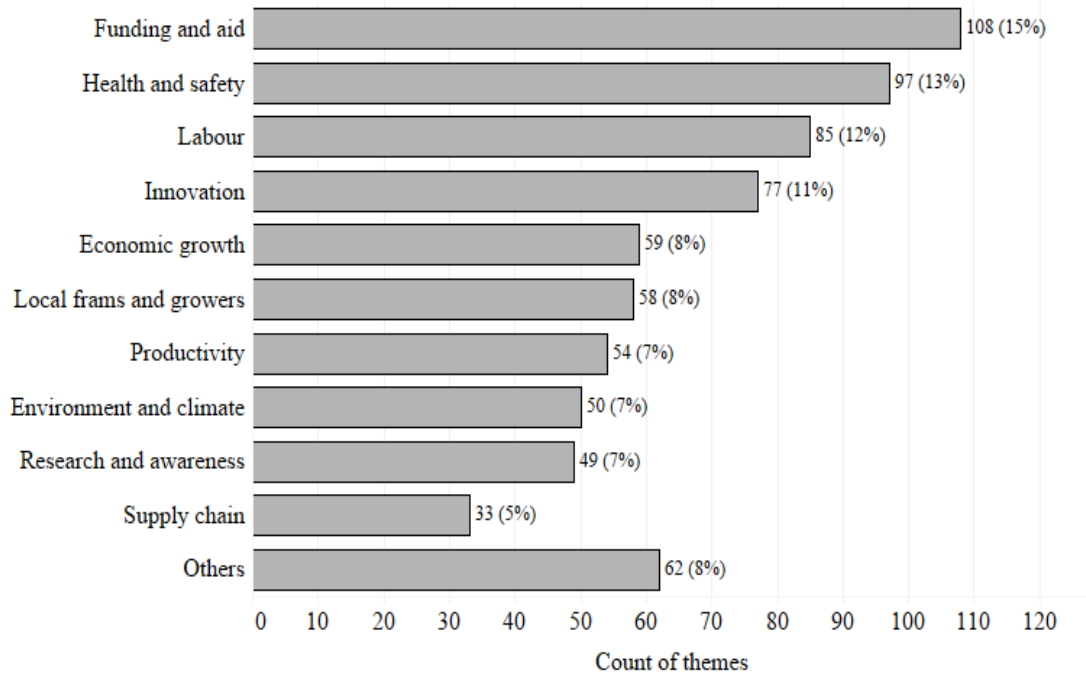
Figure 1 below shows a word cloud to get an understanding of the theme frequency or count. In the word cloud, the higher the frequency, the larger the text size. Additionally, the colour red represents higher frequency whereas green represents lower frequency. The visualization provides a quick insight into the most important themes in the news releases. It can be instantly seen that funding and aid, health and safety, labour, and innovation are important themes. Whereas, supply chain, research and awareness, and environment and climate change have low frequency in the data source.

Figure 1: Word cloud of themes



Similarly, another way to visually understand the themes is using a bar chart. Figure 2 below demonstrates the counts of all the themes including the “other” category. The bar chart here allows a visual comparison between the themes. In the chart, the longer the bar, the greater the importance of the theme. Additionally, I have also included themes as a percentage of the total by indicating them in the brackets alongside the bars. The percentages, in the chart, help compare the weights of different themes.

Figure 2: Themes bar chart



From here, I further distilled the themes down to major themes. The criteria for considering a theme as a major was above 10% of the total themes. Therefore, the major themes using the combined data from 2019 to 2021 were funding and aid, health and safety, labour, and innovation. However, when dissected by year, the compositions of the major themes differ. The major themes by year, their count, and those themes as a percentage of the total are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Major themes by year

2019			2020			2021		
Theme	Count	% Total	Theme	Count	% Total	Theme	Count	% Total
Innovation	47	14%	Funding and aid	34	18%	Funding and aid	43	21%
Local farms and growers	41	12%	Health and safety	31	16%	Health and safety	31	15%
Labour	37	11%	Labour	26	14%	Labour	22	11%

As noted earlier, I paid particular attention to the labour theme due to its relevance to the research problem. I analyzed the labour theme in detail by further categorizing them into sub-themes. A word cloud visual, as shown in figure 3, quickly indicates that labour theme mainly consisted of topics such as job creation, supporting jobs, and labour shortage. Whereas, topics such as SAW, protecting workers, and entrepreneurs are not given importance within the labour category. In terms of SAWs, the topic is given small room within the dialectic space of the news releases. Additionally, figure 4 shows the comparison between the sub-themes. It indicates that labour shortage was 16% of the total labour theme, which means it was the priority. Supporting jobs and supporting the economy were of equal priority as they each made up 14% of the labour sub-theme. Whereas there were only six mentions of the SAW sub-theme and it made up 7% of the total labour sub-theme.

Figure 3: Word cloud of labour sub-themes

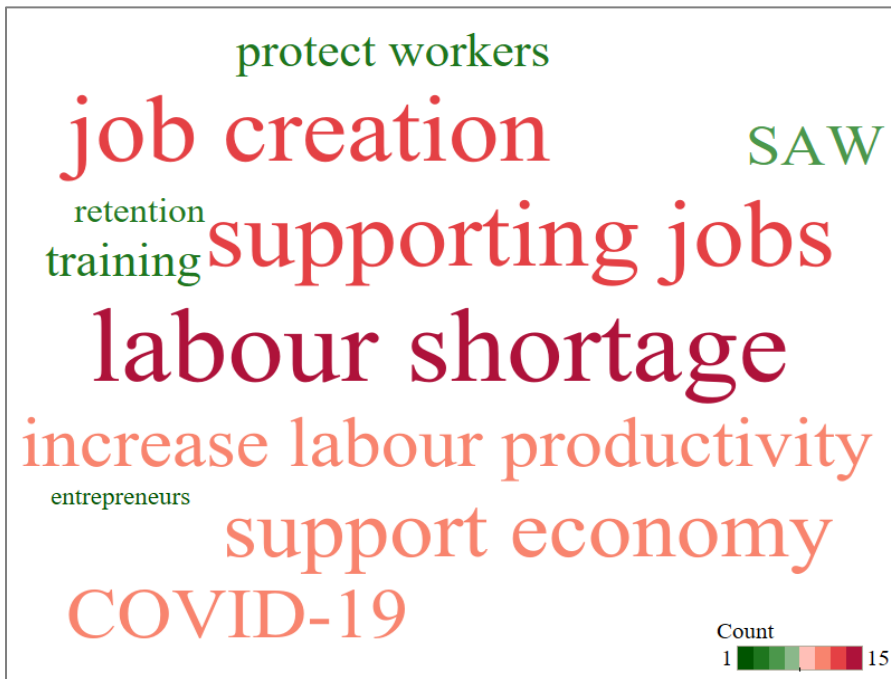
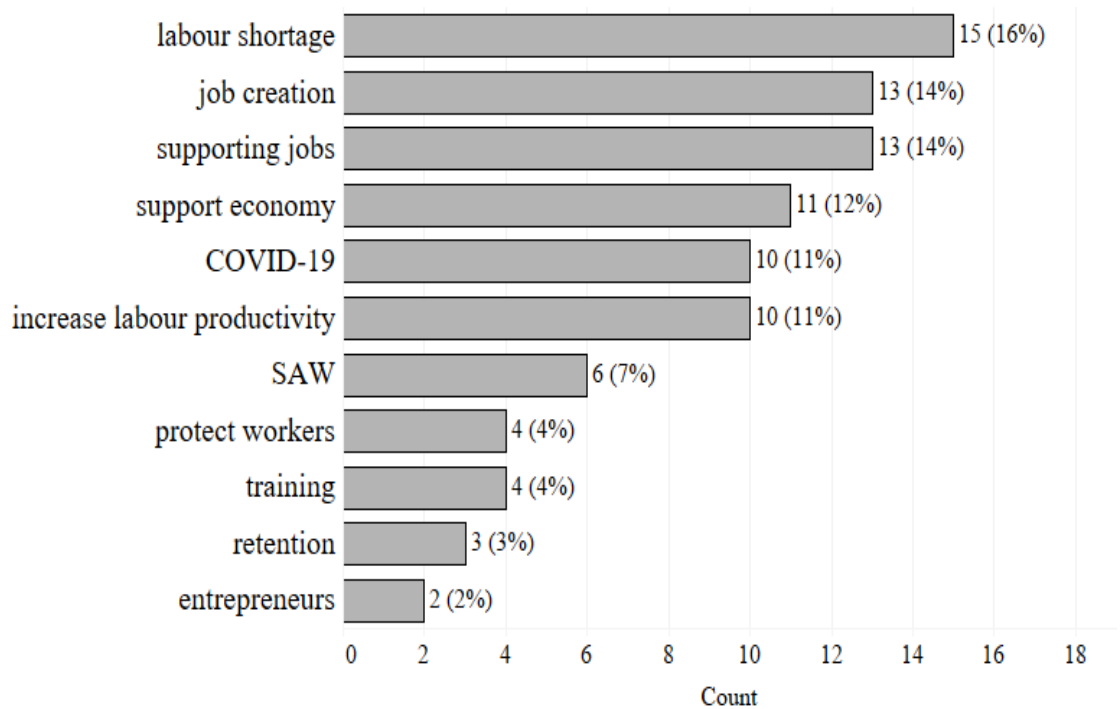


Figure 4: Labour sub-themes bar chart



In Stage 5, I looked at internal relations within the news releases. Internal relation, in the context of the study, refers to identifying the interactions between two themes within a specific press release. After establishing the major themes in the prior stage, I documented and analyzed the relationship between the major themes within each news release. For example, a phrase relating to the funding theme could also be related to labour, in that, the government could be supporting the agriculture sector through funding for training farmers. Table 5 below shows the number of press releases that are mutually inclusive between two major themes.

Table 5: Internal relations between themes

	Funding and aid	Health and safety	Labour	Innovation	Local farms and growers
Funding and aid	-	62	46	46	20
Health and safety	62	-	47	30	25
Labour	46	47	-	36	25
Innovation	46	30	36	-	17
Local farms and growers	20	25	25	17	-

Stage 6 involves the interpretation of the data. I interpreted the meanings of the major themes, internal relations as outlined identified in Stages 3,4, and 5. I revisited the structural features and individual fragments, placing them into a broader context and themes established in the earlier stages. Throughout the interpretation, I documented questions, gaps, and insights discovered during the analysis process while practicing self-

critical reflexivity. During this stage, I gave particular attention to the social groups directly or indirectly referred to in the press releases. Then, I examined the patterns that represented the power relations and inequality within the social context of the press releases. Of importance, I also reflected on the omitted details or what is not said within the text. All these components were used in the interpretation.

Research Limitations

The main limitation of this research is it focuses on major themes. This means the insights that could have been generated from the minor themes are not included. In this study, the research problem is mainly presented as an interaction between the major themes, such as funding and aid and labour-related topic. However, the research problem in this thesis is actually complex, and one that is interconnected with several aspects of SAWs, SAWP, and the agricultural sector. Nevertheless, it was important to make such a simplification because of the limited time and resources available to conduct this study.

In terms of the generic CDA approach applied in this study, one of the main limitations is that it excludes interdiscursivity i.e. analyzing external relations in the texts. Another limitation is that the framework relies heavily on the researcher's interpretation of the data and her ability to analyze the text (Mullet, 2018). This means the knowledge and capability of the researcher impact the quality of the research. Furthermore, the CDA method calls for iterative means to interpret and analyze the data (Mullet, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), which makes CDA an intensive and time-consuming endeavor. In addition, as per the CDA approach, the research is oriented towards enriching the understanding of the SAWs issue rather than formulating solutions. This research hopes that the knowledge

produced in this study would become useful in the future formulation of solutions for the research problem. Hence, the research is limited due to time constraints.

The final limitation of this study is the small scope of the study. It includes data sources from two provincial governmental bodies, i.e. OMAFRA and GNSDOA. It does not account for all provinces in Canada. It also takes into account a narrow time frame from 2019 to 2021. Furthermore, the news releases weigh the COVID-19 issues heavily as the pandemic occurred during this time frame. Therefore, a longer time frame could have provided a wider perspective on the issue, and it would have minimized the heavy weighting of the COVID-19 topic in the news releases.

In conclusion, this chapter discusses the application of generic CDA to analyze the research problem. CDA is applied in six stages. The steps include selecting a discourse related to a social problem, preparing the data sources, exploring the background of the discourse, identifying overarching themes, analyzing interrelations within the themes, and interpreting themes. Applying the generic CDA methodology to news releases organically generated 10 themes. From these 10 themes, three major themes were identified: funding and aid, health and safety, and labour. The study mainly focused on these three major themes because they are highly relevant to the research problem. Within the major themes, the labour theme was further analyzed in detail due to its significance to the research problem. The results from the analysis indicated that news releases highlighted labour shortages but did not emphasize topics related to SAWs.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As described in the previous chapter, I conducted CDA of 210 news releases from the GNSDOA and the OMAFRA. The news releases were categorized into three major themes: funding and aid, health and safety, and labour. Then, the labour theme was further analyzed to gain valuable insights into the research problem. Now, in this chapter, I interpret and provide meanings to these themes. I discuss them in relation to the research problem, i.e. understanding how government agricultural news releases produce or reproduce social inequalities for SAWs and maintain the status quo.

Low focus on seasonal agricultural workers

An interesting finding of the study is that the number of news releases related to SAW was quite low. In this section, I discuss how the low number of press releases allocated to SAWs implies that SAWs have limited power and voice. It also implies that the topic of SAWs is not a focus for the GNSDOA and the OMAFRA. I argue that by not focusing on SAWs and their issues, government news releases maintain social inequalities and the status quo concerning SAWs.

It is helpful to look at the theory of the institutional press release genre to understand the implication of low news releases in this study. The function of news releases, as explained in chapter 3, is to communicate to the community members about ongoing progress on issues (Xion, 2015). In other words, news releases produce knowledge about an issue and allow dialogue between the government and the community. So, communication produces knowledge, which is a source of power

(Foucault, 1980). In the context of this study, there were only a total of six press releases related to SAWs out of 210 press releases. It means inadequate dialogue occurred between the government and the community about SAWs through news releases. The dialectical space given to SAWs is very small. This is well indicated in figure 3, the word cloud visual, which demonstrates SAWs is a small topic within the major labour theme. Simply put, there was very limited communication and knowledge created about SAWs in the community. Since knowledge is a source of power, the low press releases related to SAWs imply that SAWs have an incredibly limited source of power through agricultural news releases.

Further analysis of SAWs-related press releases solidifies my argument. SAWs and their concerns are not represented and discussed enough in the press releases. Out of six SAWs-related press releases, the majority of them appeared in 2020 (4 press releases). Both 2019 and 2021 had one press release each related to SAWs. The low number of press releases also implies that the topic of SAWs was not a main focus for the government institutions. This is especially evident in the page-long 2019 press release called “Working Together to Help the Agri-Food Sector Grow” (Queen’s Printer for Ontario). The press release reported on the Annual Conference of Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Agriculture Ministers, where they discussed common priorities. While the press release primarily focused on reducing federal regulatory burdens for domestic farmers, it also briefly touched on topics such as trade, labour, and health and safety issues in the agricultural sector. The quote below is an example of the issues discussed during the conference.

The Ministers discussed recent restrictions on Canadian agri-food products including beef, pork, and canola by China and agreed to strongly encourage the federal government to continue working with Chinese authorities on a resolution to this issue. The Ministers are also jointly advocating to the federal government for provinces to be involved as changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program are implemented. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2019)

It is noteworthy that the page-long press release only devotes a sentence to the SAWP despite indicating joint interest from all the provincial ministers. It shows that, while the SAWP is a component of all the provinces, it is not a significant focus. The above quote specifically mentions the SAWP in the context of federal regulation and changes. However, it does not elaborate on why the SAWP is essential to the provinces, what are the challenges with the SAWP that necessitate change, or why the involvement of provincial governments is important as the federal government implements changes to the program. This indicates that government news releases from the GNSDOA and the OMAFRA are fairly silent about SAWs and related topics. Here, the theory of silence becomes relevant. As explained in chapter 3, silences are as important to note as what is being said in a text, so paying attention to these silences can assist in discovering truth and revealing unequal power relations (Foucault, 1990). For instance, while the 2019 press release talks about SAWP, it omits to talk about seasonal workers specifically. Most importantly, there is no discussion about SAWs' perspectives and the inequalities they face. A lack of discussion around these topics means the problems are unlikely to get

resolved. Therefore, silence regarding these topics legitimizes social inequalities and causes the status quo to be maintained for SAWs.

Similarly, in 2020, there are no mentions of challenges and inequalities faced by SAWs or ways to improve SAWP. This implies the GNSDOA and the OMAFRA believe that the SAWP is working as it should. Nevertheless, the difference in 2020 is that the number of press releases related to SAWs increased slightly (from one press release in 2019 to four press releases in 2020) and the workers were directly mentioned in some press releases. The main reason SAWs came into the highlight was because COVID-19 worsened labour shortages in the sector. The quote below shows the importance of SAWs and the impact of COVID-19 in the agricultural sector.

Ontario's agriculture industry, specifically farms growing fruits and vegetables like tomatoes, melons, and peaches, are labour intensive and highly dependent on seasonal agricultural workers. COVID-19 has interrupted regular flows of worker travel and has resulted in some gaps in labour availability. This could result in some crops being unharvested and financial loss for the agri-food industry. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2020)

Particularly, phrases such as “highly dependent on seasonal agricultural workers” and “regular flows of worker travel” demonstrate the extent to which SAWs are part and parcel of the agricultural sector. It shows that SAWs are a regular or permanent part of the agricultural sector, despite SAWs being labeled as temporary workers. The workers are essential for food production as well as for the financial health of the agri-food industry.

This fact became apparent in the news releases as the pandemic added additional pressure on the food production system. In the following paragraphs, I take a quick detour to illustrate the impact of the pandemic on the agricultural sector. I do so because it is important to understand the impact of the pandemic before discussing its implications for SAWs.

The COVID-19 pandemic added extra pressure to the food production system in several ways. A sign that the agricultural sector was under pressure from the pandemic was the decrease in the number of press releases published by the government institutions, i.e. GNSDOA and OMAFRA combined. The number of news releases published reduced by more than half in 2020 (48 press releases) compared to 2019 (112 press releases). The reduction in them is likely connected to the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of government restrictions. The pandemic could have made communicating through news releases difficult, leading to a decrease in productivity within the institutions. Additionally, there were also changes in the composition of the major themes. The major themes in 2020 were funding and aid, health and safety, and labour, while in the prior year the major themes include innovation, local farms, and growers and labour. This shows that the emphasis on innovation and local farms in 2019 was replaced by funding and aid and health and safety. In 2020, funding and aid-related news releases grew significantly. There were 34 press releases (17% of the total 2020 themes) related to the funding and aid theme. These press releases appeared in the context of health and safety related to COVID-19. For example, the quote below demonstrated funding from the government to improve food safety in the beef and hog industry.

The governments of Canada and Ontario are investing up to \$10 million in emergency assistance for beef and hog farmers. The funding will help cover the increased costs of feeding market ready cattle and hogs due to COVID-19. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2020)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, several restrictions limited agriculture production. This could be the reason for increased mentions of financial support from the government institutions. Additionally, the theme of health and safety appears frequently. There were 31 press releases on health and safety, and they accounted for 15% of the total 2020 themes. The analysis of the health and safety theme indicates COVID-19 was a major issue. The news releases mentioned COVID-19 in the context of the government providing financial support to the farmers. The need for financial support increased as the agricultural sector also had to invest more to implement health and safety measures. For example, the quote below shows governments allocating funds to protect employees during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The governments of Canada and Ontario are investing up to \$2.25 million to help farmers better protect employees and ensure the continued supply of healthy food products for consumers during the COVID-19 outbreak. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2020)

The quote indicates that protecting employees and farmers from the COVID-19 disease was also a concern in 2020. Several other press releases mentioned how the government is helping minimize COVID-19 exposure in workplaces. For instance, the press releases below talked about ways the government is implementing safety measures to protect workers. It demonstrates that the government is providing financial help to the

agricultural sector to minimize COVID-19 exposure. Moreover, the use of the word “workplace” in the quote below shows that the pandemic also impacted labour.

Enhanced Agrifood Workplace Protection Program, a commitment of \$25.5 million to help minimize COVID 19 exposure risks in the workplace... (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2020)

Furthermore, the number of press releases with the labour theme increased from 11% in 2019 to 14% in 2020. There were 6 press releases (out of 26) directly related to both COVID-19 and labour in 2020. The remaining 20 press releases indirectly mentioned COVID-19. This implies that COVID-19 aggravated the labour issues in 2020. The quote below indicates the lack of workers in the agricultural sector in 2020 and the Ontario government’s attempt to connect them to employers.

The Ontario government launched ontario.ca/AgFoodJobs to match potential workers with employers looking to fill roles in the farming and agri-food sector, providing resources and job listings across the agriculture and food supply chain including grocery retail, food processing, distribution and other agribusinesses. (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2020)

Hence, the pandemic worsened the labour shortage, increased the need for more health and safety measures for the workers, and created a need for higher financial assistance from the government. Now that I have established these facts, I move on to analyzing the implication of the pandemic for SAWs in the remaining part of this section.

Since the pandemic aggravated the labour shortage it created a need for more SAWs. It also worsened labour shortages due to COVID-19 isolation requirements for the

workers. The quote below demonstrates how the governments responded to support SAWs during the isolation period.

Helping agri-food sectors cover the incremental costs associated with the mandatory 14-day isolation period through \$50 million in federal funding for the Mandatory Isolation Support Program for Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW). (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2020)

as part of its actions to protect the health and safety of foreign workers, the Government of Canada has been working with provinces and territories, as well as a range of partners and stakeholders, to ensure employers and temporary foreign workers are aware of their obligations and respect the rules to help prevent the importation and spread of COVID-19... (Province of Nova Scotia, 2020)

In the quotes above, the use of words such as “temporary” and “foreign” to describe SAWs, shows that SAWs continue to be considered as the supplementary and temporary labour force. While some support is provided to the workers during the pandemic the use of such words deemphasizes their importance. Mainly, it obscures the fact that SAWs are a permanent feature of the agricultural sector in Canada and reinforces their status quo. It also perpetuates the problem of SAWs having “less than full legal status”, meaning they do not have the right to unionize or participate in the demonstration and are unable to benefit from social security programs (Goldring et al., 2007; Hennebry and Preibisch, 2010). Moreover, positioning SAWs as temporary means their rights continue to be limited and they continue to be vulnerable to exploitation and unfair treatment. SAWs

simply do not have an avenue to voice their concerns and they are not able to participate in society due to their temporary status. They are treated unequally in society as they have less power compared to workers that are considered permanent. In this way, the news releases reinforce the power imbalance in the agricultural sector and social inequalities related to SAWs continue.

The pandemic, however, had a silver lining because it brought attention to the importance of SAWs. It is worth noting the change in tone of the press releases related to SAWs in 2019 compared to 2020. In 2020, when the pandemic challenges were at their peak, the number of press releases related to SAW increased to four compared to only one press release in the prior year. Plus, in 2020, there is much more emphasis on the vital role of SAWs in food production and more acknowledgment of the contributions of SAWs in the sector. In 2021, the emphasis on the importance of SAWs continues. The quotes below are extracted from the press release in 2021, where the contribution of SAWs is highlighted. The quote shows that during the pandemic, the food production and supply chain were challenging due to labour shortages. So, SAWs were essential in filling the labour gap during this period.

"Our international workers have grown and harvested our food and helped keep our food supply chain strong throughout the COVID-19 pandemic," said Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

However, the number of press releases related to SAWs was reduced back down to one press release in 2021 compared to the prior year. This could be partly because the SAWs do not have a formal avenue to voice their concerns. Their perspectives and issues are

indirectly reflected through domestic farmers and employers. It indicates unequal power between the domestic group and SAWs, where concerns from SAWs are only heard so far as domestic groups are willing and able to voice them. For instance, the previous quote, “Helping agri-food sectors...”, shows the Ontario government supporting foreign workers, which includes SAWs, as incremental costs associated with mandatory restrictions became an issue for the domestic agri-food sector. As a result, it appears that the representation of the seasonal workers depends on domestic groups.

Thus, it can be inferred from the analysis that SAWs do not have an adequate voice or power in the news releases. This is because the news releases have not generated enough knowledge about the SAWP, SAWs, and related topics. The analysis shows that the GNSDOA and the OMAFRA are not particularly focused on those topics. Also, the press releases imply the SAWs and the SAWP are fine the way they currently exist. This perpetuates the social inequality currently present within SAWP and leads to the maintenance of the status quo regarding SAWs.

High focus on domestic groups

In this section, I analyze further to look into areas of focus and discuss their implications on SAWs. The analysis in the previous section established that SAWs are not a main focus of the government as their representation is quite low in the news releases. A key finding of the study is that news releases instead put a high emphasis on domestic solutions to solve agricultural issues. Using the theory of discourse, I argue that such high prioritization implies domestic groups have more power compared to SAWs, whose voices have been marginalized.

As outlined in chapter 3, power can be exercised by controlling context (Van Dijk, 1993). Discourse is also used to rationalize inequality by positively representing one's own group, and negatively representing or not representing "others" (Van Dijk, 1993). This is evident from the analysis of news releases from the year 2019. The context of the news releases is primarily around domestic themes. For instance, as shown in table 4, the news releases in 2019 focused on domestic themes: innovation, local farms, and labour. This implies that issues concerning domestic have more power compared to SAWs' issues.

The contribution and potential benefits of the domestic are highlighted while the contributions of SAWs are marginalized. For instance, the innovation theme appeared in 47 news releases, which accounted for 13% of the total 2019 themes. Innovation is presented as a solution to the industry's challenges in a large number of press releases. Below is an example of a quote related to innovation from the press releases. In the quote, innovation is presented as an answer to problems such as making farm operations more efficient, helping the local business grow, and making the supply chain smoother. However, the contributions of SAWs in solving similar problems in the agricultural sector have not been highlighted to the same extent.

Investing in on-farm innovation and improvements helps ensure our farmers continue to meet growing consumer demands for our safe, high-quality food while also increasing the sector's capacity to compete at home and internationally, said Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2019).

Another interesting quote below related to innovation shows the Ontario government's investment in robotics and artificial intelligence. The implication is that as the agricultural sector increases capital-intensive technologies, there will be less need for SAWs. It indicates the effort of the government to replace SAWs and become less reliant on the SAWP. It also highlights the stigma that agriculture is a low skill work, which is replaceable by machines. In reality, the farm work is quite complex. While innovation may produce efficiencies in the sector, it is unlikely that innovation will be able to replace SAWs completely.

The Ontario government is investing in new partnerships in agri-food innovation, including pilot projects in robotics and artificial intelligence, to help the industry address pandemic related challenges, ongoing labour shortages, and create new opportunities for growth across the sector. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

A further examination of the innovation theme through internal relation analysis also validates the government's preference for finding domestic solutions versus improving the SAWP. Internal relation analysis involves identifying the interactions between two themes within a specific news press release. Innovation is interrelated to the funding and aid theme. There were 46 press releases containing both the funding and aid theme as well as the innovation theme. For example, the quote below shows the Ontario government supporting the beef industry by helping them invest in equipment and infrastructure.

Beef Farmers of Ontario welcomes the announcement of Canadian Agricultural Partnership funding for provincial abattoirs, which are an

integral part of Ontario's beef industry, said Joe Hill, president of Beef Farmers of Ontario. This funding comes at a time of critical challenges in the beef industry due to shortages in beef processing capacity.

Support for abattoirs will help enable investment in equipment and infrastructure that assists businesses in remaining competitive and adapting to market-driven demands. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2020)

Here, the government offers financial support to invest in technology and innovation domestically to remain competitive on a global scale. The quote frames innovation as a solution to the core limitations of the agricultural sector. Phrases such as “enable investment in equipment and infrastructure”, “remaining competitive” and “market-driven demands” indicate the government's emphasis on the importance of innovation. They demonstrate, in general, the government's commitment to the market model of food production, which includes innovation at the core of global competition, while deemphasizing the role of SAWs in the global competition.

Similarly, local farms and growers are also shown as one of the main solutions to agricultural challenges. Local farms and growers were prioritized in the agricultural sector. The contributions of SAWs to those farms, however, are not articulated in the news releases. Again, it is apparent that domestic groups have representation and voice in the news releases while foreign workers are not acknowledged to the same extent. For instance, the local farms and growers theme appears in many press releases. There are 41 news releases or 12% of the total 2019 themes compared to only one press release related to SAWs in 2019. In addition, there are several instances of the government encouraging consumers to buy more local food to support local farms. For instance, news releases

talked about events that would promote local food such as Foodland Ontario Retailer Award display contests. The contest creates awareness about local food and increases consumer interest in local produce. While promoting local foods to encourage consumers to buy locally does support the agricultural sector, it is framed in terms of individual consumer behaviours. The problem is addressed on a surface level, where the onus of buying local is on consumers. Thus, the analysis of the news releases shows that it does not tackle the root issue of cost-price squeeze and global competitive pressure in the agricultural sector. In Canada, agricultural input costs such as fuel, seeds, and fertilizer costs are increasing, causing profit margins to shrink (Ferguson, 2007), and making it difficult for local farms to compete with comparatively cheaper agricultural products from abroad. The quote indicates that rather than fixing the root cause, the government institutions are focused on surface level problems.

Furthermore, an internal relation analysis between the local farms and growers theme and the funding and aid theme indicates the government institution's support for domestic groups. There were 20 press releases with both local farms and growers and funding and aid. For example, an extract from a press release below shows that both provincial and federal governments are helping local farmers and agri-food businesses.

The governments of Canada and Ontario are investing more than \$7.9 million through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to help farmers improve their business operations and bring more safe, high-quality foods to markets. This funding will support more than 670 projects across Ontario for eligible farmers and agri-food businesses. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2020).

The quote indicates that governments have a large number of projects (more than 670 projects) supporting local farms and growers. It implies that the Ontario government is emphasizing the “support local food” sentiment and investing a noticeable amount of money to reflect this sentiment to the public. In other words, funding the local farms and growers is compatible with the “support local food” sentiment. The facts that are incompatible with this sentiment are not presented in the news releases. They obscure the sector’s reliance on SAWs from countries outside Canada (such as Mexico and Caribbean countries) and unfair treatment of the seasonal workers. So, the news releases paint an incomplete picture of realities in the agricultural sector by focusing on the domestic sentiment of supporting local food.

Additionally, the news release acknowledges, to some extent, that domestically the farmers are struggling but the struggles of SAWs are omitted altogether. The Ontario government only focuses on the mental health challenges faced by domestic farmers. For example, the quote below shows government support for farmers’ challenges with mental health:

Farming can be a tough business, one that sometimes takes a toll on farmers and their families. We want people to stand up and talk about it... (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2019).

An internal relation analysis of the health and safety theme and the funding and aid further validates this finding. The health and safety theme appeared most strongly in the context of funding and aid. There were 62 press releases with both funding and aid, and health and safety themes. The quote below indicates the interlinkages of funding with health and safety. The quote shows that government funding continues to be allocated to

improve health and safety in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, it demonstrates the importance of health and safety, especially during the last three years. However, it shows the impact of COVID-19 and government support provided to domestic groups. The phrase “relief will ensure families, seniors, businesses, and workers’ specifically demonstrate domestic group, while there is no mention of SAWs.

Ontario is working to address the economic impacts that COVID-19 has posed to many of the organizations that make up the fabric of our communities. The province is now delivering an estimated \$13.5 billion in total support for people and job creators as part of Ontario's Action Plan. This additional relief will ensure families, seniors, businesses, and workers are supported through the second wave of COVID-19 and beyond. (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2020)

The quote also indicates that the agricultural sector continues to be economically vulnerable to unexpected external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby needing government funding and aid to deal with those types of shocks. The phrase in the quote, “economic impacts that COVID-19 has posed to many of the organizations” implies that organizations in agriculture faced economic shock from COVID-19 and experienced its negative effects. Additionally, phrases such as “delivering an estimated \$13.5 billion”, “support for people” and “additional relief” emphasize ways the government is funding the agricultural sector to deal with the COVID-19 shock. It also indicates that government support is not limited to direct financial help, but the support expands to programs and projects that benefit the sector.

In terms of labour, 37 press releases (accounting for 11% of the total 2019 themes) are included in the labour theme. Apart from labour shortage, the theme is framed in terms of creating and supporting jobs nationally. For example, the quote below demonstrates the Ontario government's effort to support the agricultural sector by creating jobs domestically.

Ontario's government is working hard to make it easier for the entire agri-food sector, including small food processors, to do business, grow and create jobs in Ontario. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2019).

Likewise, internal relation analysis between local farms and growers and the labour shows the government's support for domestic groups. The analysis shows that government institutions are trying to find a domestic solution to the problem by indirectly linking buying local with job creation. In 2019, 14 press releases contained both the local farms and growers theme, and the labour theme. For example, the Ontario government allocated more than \$75,000 in August of 2019 to help the local grape growers increase productivity and be more competitive in the market (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2019). It is implied that helping the grape growers in this way will bring more retail opportunities for winemakers. This will, in turn, help domestic retail job creation.

Therefore, it is evident from the analysis that government institutions are focused on solving the agricultural challenges domestically. Improving innovation and helping local farms and growers domestically are positioned as solutions. The problem with focusing on domestic is that it obscures important contributions of SAWs in the agricultural sector. It also deemphasizes the root causes of the challenges of the Canadian

agricultural sector on a global scale. As a result, the power is tilted in favour of domestic groups, and SAWs are positioned unequally.

Labour shortage and seasonal agricultural workers

In this section, I analyze the labour-related press release in detail. In doing so I further support my argument that news releases have a strong domestic context and inadequate or unequal representation of SAWs, thereby creating inequalities for SAWs.

The labour theme appeared in 87 news releases and accounted for 11% of the total themes across the three years. While there were multiple labour-related topics discussed in these press releases, the majority of them focused on labour shortages. The analysis of the news releases presents labour shortages in terms of domestic labour challenges. For example, the quote below demonstrates the government's solution to the labour shortage in the agricultural sector.

This is a very labour intensive sector so it is critical to attract more people to ensure our food supply chain continues to provide healthy and nutritious food to Ontario families during this COVID-19 outbreak, said the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Our government is doing everything possible to ensure we support our farmers and food processors to fill job vacancies, including the development of a new web portal connecting workers with employers. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2020)

Here, the solution provided to overcome the labour shortage is to attract more domestic workers and develop a job portal to connect them with employers. At a face value, they

are effective ways to address the labour shortage. From the perspective of governments, it is logical to rely more on domestic workers and become self-sufficient. In this case, the labour shortage is framed in terms of individual preferences. It is implied that since agricultural work is associated with negative perceptions, “three Ds”, it is important to change those perceptions. So, the quote above shows that the government institutions are attempting to encourage individuals and change their preferences, thereby attempting to be self-sufficient in terms of labour. An internal relation analysis of the labour theme and the funding and aid theme further validates the fact that the government is attempting to be more self-sufficient. There were 46 common press releases containing both funding and aid, and labour themes. The following quote shows the labour-related funding from provincial as well as federal funding to the agricultural sector. The key phrases within the quote are “providing more than \$5.4 million” and “increase labour productivity”. The implication here is that as labour productivity increases, there will be less need for workers including SAWs.

The Governments of Canada and Ontario are providing more than \$5.4 million through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to help food processing businesses improve food safety, increase labour productivity and enable better access to markets. (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2020)

However, on further analysis, the labour shortage issue needs to be addressed on a deeper level. The structural reasons for labour shortage such as the difficulty accessing capital to start farming, low wages, and working seasonal hours in agriculture are not acknowledged. This means the labour gap in the sector will continue to expand because the underlying problems have not been addressed. As a result, the status quo in

agriculture is maintained. In other words, since domestic farm employers and the agricultural sector needs more workers, they are incentivized to maintain the current structure of the SAWP. Therefore, the inherent power structure and the power dynamic within the social groups have not changed in the SAWP. So, the benefits to domestic employers and the agricultural sector continue to come at the expense of the SAWs (Hennebry, 2006). For instance, in the first quote, “This is a very labour intensive sector...”, the phrase “doing everything possible to ensure we support our farmers,” indicates the Ontario government working in favour of domestic employers and giving them power over SAWs. As established in the literature review, SAWs are “legal but deportable” and legally tied to a single employer, and domestic farm employers can terminate and deport the SAWs if the employer is not satisfied with them (Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services, 2005). This produces inequality as it makes the SAWs vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Basok, 2007). Therefore, there is a power imbalance in favour of domestic farm employers and governmental institutions. The analysis of news releases also indicates that agricultural issues are not framed in terms of their root cause. The issues are framed as problems of individual preference and perception instead of framing them in terms of their structural or root cause. This leads to a continuation of agricultural challenges as they are. In other words, it leads to the reproduction of the status quo and power imbalance existing in the agricultural sector, which includes the SAWP.

Reflection of structural agricultural challenges in news releases

In this section, I look at the facts established in the literature review about the agricultural sector, particularly reliance on government funding and labour shortage, and analyze how they correspond to the findings of the study. The purpose of the comparison is to understand to what extent the structure of the agricultural sector in Canada is reflected in the government news releases. As established in the literature review, the SAWP and SAWs were born due to the structure of the agricultural sector. So, I argue that as long as the structural components of the sector remain the same, the status quo of the workers and inequalities in the program will continue to be reinforced.

The literature review demonstrated that growing reliance on financial support has become a structural component of the agricultural sector. The findings of this study also show that government funding and aid continue to be increasingly important to the agricultural sector. The literature review explains that the agricultural sector can no longer rely on traditional sources of business financing, such as private family capital or debt financing. The importance of government funding is reflected in the findings as well. In the last three years (2019 to 2021), the funding and aid theme appeared in 108 news releases and accounted for 14% of the total themes. This makes funding and aid the theme with the highest occurrence. Similarly, the literature review and the findings show that the agricultural sector in Canada has become more reliant on government funding in recent years. The literature review indicates the size of government-funded programs has expanded between 2019 to 2021. The total government-funded programs in agriculture expanded from \$2.8 billion in 2019 to \$3.2 billion in 2020 and then to \$5.6 billion in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Correspondingly, the number of press releases related to

funding and aid increased between 2019 to 2021. It should be noted that the increase in funding is partly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding and aid theme increased from 31 press releases in 2019 to 34 press releases in 2020 and then to 43 press releases in 2021. The analysis of major themes in 2021 indicates that financial support from the government institutions increased compared to the previous year because they were trying to boost agriculture and fuel economic recovery. There were 43 press releases related to funding and aid, which made up 20% of the total 2021 themes. These press releases imply that additional financial support was necessary for the farmers to recover from the economic slowdown in the prior years. For example, the quote below talks about stimulating economic growth by investing in agri-food projects.

The Ontario government is investing \$7 million into agri-food research projects that will support greater environmentally friendly agricultural practices, protect livestock health and welfare, and stimulate economic growth... (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

In addition, governments supported the agriculture sector in several different areas such as adopting new technology, improving production, supporting workers, and increasing health and safety. For example, the quote below mentions the CAP program and the government's priorities in increasing food safety, accelerating innovation, and improving agricultural businesses.

The Governments of Canada and Ontario are investing \$7.3 million through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to help support farmers and agri-food businesses. The investment will fund projects in priority areas that increase food safety, accelerate sector innovation and help

farmers bring new products to market to grow their businesses.

(Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

It is interesting to note the government funding in support of health and safety in the sector. The health and safety theme appeared second most frequently in the 2021 press releases. In 2021, there were 31 press releases (accounted for 15% of the total 2021 themes) related to health and safety. It appears that the increase in government funding was partly due to increase health and safety measures.

Therefore, the findings of the study reflect a similar pattern to the literature review. The issue of increased reliance on the government for financial support is reflected in the government discourse of news releases. This shows that structural challenges continue to remain intact. The press releases reflect more of the same in terms of structural challenges, so the implication is that issues related to SAWs are unlikely to change. As a result, the status quo regarding SAWs is likely to remain the same as well.

Similarly, labour shortage continues to be a structural challenge in the sector. The quote from the press releases below shows that labour disruptions continue to create labour shortages. The quote shows that restrictive health measures required in the workplace limited productivity and availability of the workers.

Many of our partners in the agri-food sector have voiced their concerns about labour disruptions to our food processing and supply chain due to the pandemic and they shared the need for a labour strategy for agriculture and food processing, said Minister Hardeman. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

Labour shortage was considered one of the main bottlenecks in 2021 and the government focused on innovation, youth, and training to help alleviate the labour challenges in the sector.

Labour challenges continue to be one of the leading bottlenecks to growth in our agriculture sector, said the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

Labour shortage continued to be an issue and several news releases focused on connecting people to existing agricultural jobs in the market. It also focused on innovation and new technologies. The analysis of press releases suggests that innovation would enhance productivity. It implied that enhanced productivity through innovation would result in a reduced need for labour. For example, the quote below shows the government's investment in artificial intelligence to potentially help alleviate the labour shortage in agriculture.

Our government is investing in these projects to help farmers and other businesses adopt innovative solutions that help increase their productivity in the agri-food sector," said the Honourable Lisa Thompson, provincial Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

Some press releases also focused on youth. They focused on encouraging young people to participate in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, it focused on training to help people get the necessary skills to work in the agricultural sector. For example, the quote below

promotes 4H Ontario, a youth organization, and its efforts to help young people learn about working in the agricultural sector.

4-H Ontario youth members will learn about careers in agriculture and agri-food businesses and develop the necessary skills training that build Ontario communities. 4-H Ontario provides enhanced opportunities for youth aged 6-21 to reach their full potential through community-based clubs. (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2021)

Therefore, the findings of the study also reflect a similar pattern to the literature review in terms of labour shortage. As the labour shortage continues and the government's response to dealing with this structural challenge does not change, the issues related to SAWs are unlikely to change as well. As a result, the implication is that the social inequality present in the SAWP is more likely to continue, maintaining the status quo of SAWs.

In conclusion, government news releases from the GNSDOA and OMAFRA construct, maintain, and legitimize the social inequalities and the status quo concerning SAWs in four ways. First, the news releases have a low representation of SAWs. They do not give adequate voice as the news releases fail to generate enough knowledge about the SAWP, SAWs, and related topics. This perpetuates social inequalities and leads to the maintenance of the status quo regarding SAWs. Second, the analysis shows that the government institutions are focused on solving the agricultural challenges domestically. It appears that there is a sense of "support local food" sentiment in the government institutions. The topics related to this sentiment are emphasized while unrelated topics, such as the need for SAWs, are obscured. So, a problem with focusing on domestic is that

it obscures important contributions of SAWs in the agricultural sector. It also deemphasizes the root causes of the agricultural challenges, which are global in nature. This produces unequal power in favour of domestic groups. Third, as the root causes of the sector are not addressed structural problems such as labour shortages continue to occur. The increasing labour shortage will incentivize domestic farm employers and the agricultural sector to maintain the current structure of the SAWP. This means the inherent power structure and the power relations will not change. Lastly, as the structural components of the agricultural sector remain intact, social inequality present in the SAWP is more likely to continue while maintaining the status quo of SAWs.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Summary of the research

In this thesis, I explored the complex issue of SAWs. I uniquely combined agriculture, government institutions, and news releases into the equation of the SAWs to enhance existing knowledge and understanding of the topic. The main goal of this research was to detangle a small part of the complex problem rather than attempting to solve the complex problem entirely. Specifically, my goal was to understand how government discourse, as presented in government agricultural news releases, produces or reproduces social inequalities for SAWs and helps to maintain the status quo.

In studying the research problem, I conducted a thorough literature review. In the literature review, I presented two main challenges related to the agricultural sector in Canada. The first challenge was that the number of farms is decreasing due to farm consolidations. The farms are being impacted by the phenomenon called cost-price squeeze. As a result, the farms are under tremendous pressure to achieve economies of scale by consolidating. The second challenge is that the agricultural sector is facing persistent labour shortages due to the absence of domestic workers interested in the agricultural sector. Domestic workers are disinterested and have self-selected themselves out of the agricultural sector because jobs in agriculture are associated with the stigma of dirty, dangerous, and difficult. So, this labour gap is filled by SAWs, the supplementary labour force in Canada. SAWs temporarily migrate to Canada through the SAWP. The SAWP benefits the Canadian agricultural sector by providing on-demand cheap labour. However, the benefit comes at the cost of SAWs because the structure of the SAWP

program, implemented by the federal government, generates inequalities for SAWs. The SAWP, implemented and regulated by the federal government, tilts the power in favour of domestic social groups. This leaves SAWs vulnerable to exploitation and unequal treatment in society.

I studied the role of government discourse, specifically government news releases to understand the power dynamic and inequalities concerning SAW. I applied CDA as the key concept for analyzing the news releases. The rationale for using CDA was that it emphasized the role of discourse in understanding power relations between social groups. The theory of CDA explains that power can be exercised through control of discourse, meaning the use of language. It encompasses the idea that discourse can also take the form of silence or omission. In addition, I also applied the theory of governmentality, defined as the regulation of social conduct by the exercise of power through government discourse. These theories helped shape the theoretical framework of the thesis. It provided insights on power exercised by the government and the power dynamics within social groups in agriculture.

In terms of methodology, I applied CDA, as it is applicable as both a theoretical framework and a methodological approach. I applied CDA in six steps. They are selecting a discourse related to a social problem, preparing the data sources, exploring the background of the discourse, identifying overarching themes, analyzing interrelations within the themes, and interpreting themes. The application of CDA organically generated 10 themes. Out of these 10 themes, three major themes were identified: funding and aid, health and safety, and labour. The study was centered around the major themes because they are highly relevant to the research problem. Furthermore, I

conducted a detailed analysis of the labour theme due to its significance to the research problem. The analysis revealed that the news releases highlighted labour shortages but did not emphasize topics related to SAW.

The findings of the study show that government news releases from the GNSDOA and the OMAFRA indeed construct, maintain, and legitimize the social inequalities and the status quo concerning SAWs. They do so in four ways. First, I argued that the news releases perpetuate social inequalities due to the low representation of SAWs in the news releases. I demonstrated that government news releases from the GNSDOA and the OMAFRA fail to generate enough knowledge about the SAWP, SAWs, and related topics. As a result, the seasonal workers do not have an adequate voice in the news releases. This leads to the maintenance of the status quo regarding SAWs. Second, the analysis shows that government institutions are focused on domestic groups. Moreover, the news releases reflect the sentiment of “support local food”. I argued that the problem with focusing on domestic is it obscures important contributions of SAWs in the sector and creates a power imbalance in favour of domestic groups. Third, I argued that the root causes of the sector are not addressed so structural problems such as labour shortages will continue to occur. The increasing labour shortage will incentivize domestic groups to maintain the current structure of the SAWP. So, the inherent power structure and the power relations will not change. The findings also validate the arguments made by scholars in the literature. For example, the findings replicate the argument in literature that the agricultural sector in Canada is increasingly relying on financial help from the government. The study discovers several insights into the reasons for the continuation of these problems in agriculture. It shows that the government is not addressing the root causes of the issues in

agriculture, which are global in nature. Rather, it is addressing the problems superficially by attempting to change individual preferences. This means the underlying structure of the sector does not change, thereby the power imbalance and inequalities related to SAW are likely to continue.

Limitations of the research

This research aims to fill the gap in the literature on SAWs. It uses CDA to analyze the government news releases to get a deeper understanding of the issue. While CDA is helpful in supporting the conclusions derived from the review of the literature, it has some limitations. CDA relies primarily on the researcher's ability to interpret the data. Therefore, the strength of the analysis comes from the ability of the researcher. It is also time consuming in nature. As a result, the scope of this research is narrowed down to three major themes. A recommendation for future research could be to look at the interaction between more than three themes.

Additionally, one of the main limitations is that it excludes interdiscursivity from the CDA methodology. Interdiscursivity, analyzing external relations between texts, consists of locating two or more texts containing different ideological positions, comparing them, and then analyzing their social implications. A recommendation for future research could be to conduct an interdiscursivity analysis between two types of government documents. It could provide valuable insights into a broader government perspective.

Furthermore, another limitation of this research is the small scope of the study. The study focuses on news releases from two provincial governments, the OMAFRA and

the GNSDOA. So, another recommendation for future research could be to expand the data source. The data source could be expanded to incorporate a longer time frame. It could also be expanded by including more provinces or using data from different governmental bodies. The data source could also be expanded to include federal news releases or forms of discourse from the federal government. This would provide valuable insights into the issue of SAWs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Action Canada. (2019). Permanently impermanent: Migrant agricultural workers in Canada. Retrieved from <https://ppforum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/PPF-AC-TF3-EN-40copies-MARCH1.pdf>
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. (2021). Canadian agricultural partnership. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/about-our-department/key-departmental-initiatives/canadian-agricultural-partnership>
- Basok, T. (2000). He Came, He Saw, He Stayed. Guest Worker Programmes and the Issue of Non-Return. *International Migration*, 38(2), 215-238.
- Basok, T. (2007). Canada's temporary migration program: A model despite flaws. *Migration Information Source*, 1, 1-6.
- Basok, T., & Belanger, D. (2016). Migration Management, Disciplinary Power, and Performances of Subjectivity: Agricultural Migrant Workers' in Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 41(2), 139-164.
- Basok, T., & Belanger, D. (2016). Migration management, disciplinary power, and performances of subjectivity: agricultural migrant workers' in Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 41(2), 139-164.
- Binford, A. (2019). Assessing temporary foreign worker programs through the prism of Canada's seasonal agricultural worker program: Can they be reformed or should they be eliminated? *Dialectical Anthropology*, 43(4), 347-366.
doi:10.1007/s10624-019-09553-6

- Binford, L. (2006). The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and Mexican Development (FOCAL Policy Paper). *Canadian Foundation for the Americas*.
- Böhning, W. R. (1984). *Studies in international labour migration*. Macmillan.
- Burt, M., & Meyer-Robinson, R. (2016). Sowing the Seeds of Growth: Temporary Foreign Workers in Agriculture. The Conference Board of Canada, 26 pages, December 1, 2016.
- Busch, L., & Bain, C. (2004). New! Improved? The transformation of the global agrifood system. *Rural sociology*, 69(3), 321-346.
- Cohen, A., & Hjalmarson, E. (2020). Quiet struggles: Migrant farmworkers, informal labor, and everyday resistance in Canada. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 61(2-3), 141-158.
- Dale, B., Fehr, C., & Pfenning, J. (2020). Knowing the borders of Canada's food system. *Union Farmer Quarterly*, 26(1), 16.
- Dimitrov, R. (2017). *Strategic silence: Public relations and indirect communication*. Routledge.
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2022). Hire a temporary worker through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program: Overview. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/agricultural/seasonal-agricultural.html>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2022). Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Retrieved July 4, 2022, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers.html>

- Fairclough, N. (2001). Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 5(11), 121-138.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Psychology Press.
- Ferguson, N. (2007). The seasonal agricultural workers program: Considerations for the future of farming and the implications of managed migration. *Our Diverse Cities*, 3(1), 189-193.
- Foucault M. (1979). Governmentality. *Ideol. Conscious.* 6:5–2
- Foucault, M. (1990). The history of sexuality: An introduction, volume I. *Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 95.*
- Foucault, M. (1991). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gabriel, C., & Macdonald, L. (2011). Citizenship at the Margins: The Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and Civil Society Advocacy. *Politics & Policy (Statesboro, Ga.)*, 39(1), 45-67.
- Gabriel, C., & Macdonald, L. (2011). Citizenship at the margins: the Canadian seasonal agricultural worker program and civil society advocacy. *Politics & Policy*, 39(1), 45-67.
- Goldring, L. (2010). TEMPORARY WORKER PROGRAMS AS PRECARIOUS STATUS. *Canadian Issues/Thèmes canadiens*.
- Gordon, C. (1980). Power/knowledge. *Pantheon: New York*.

- Government of Canada. (2020). Hire a temporary worker through the seasonal agricultural worker program. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/agricultural/seasonal-agricultural.html>
- Government of Nova Scotia. (2022). Department of Agriculture: About Us. Retrieved July 4, 2022, from <https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/agriculture/about>
- Habermas, J. (1967). Universität in der Demokratie—Demokratisierung der Universität. *Merkur*, 21(5), 416-433.
- Hein, T. (2020). Agriculture in Canada. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/press-release/agriculture-in-canada>
- Hennebry, J. (2006). Cuantas Temporadas?: Globalization and the Mexican-Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. In *Annual Meeting of the Canadian Latin American and Caribbean Studies Association*. Calgary, Alberta, Canada.
- Hennebry, J., & Preibisch, K. (2010). Permanently temporary: the second generation of temporary migration—Canada in the world. *Permanently Temporary: Temporary Foreign Workers and Canada's Changing Attitude to Citizenship and Immigration (Research Roundtable)*(Toronto: Social Planning Toronto, CERIS, OCASI).
- Hennebry, J., & Preibisch, K. (2012). A Model for Managed Migration? Re-Examining Best Practices in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. *International Migration*, 50(S1), E19-E40.
- Hobbs, J. E., Fearne, A., & Spriggs, J. (2002). Incentive structures for food safety and quality assurance: an international comparison. *Food control*, 13(2), 77-81.

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2021). AGRI - Annex A: Difference between TFWP & IMP - May 22, 2020. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/committees/agri-may-22-2020/annex-a-difference-between-tfwp-imp.html>
- Janoff, B. (2001). 'Face Off. *Progressive Grocer*, 80, 14-19.
- Johnson, & McLean, E. (2020). Discourse Analysis. In *Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Second Edition, pp. 377–383). Elsevier Ltd.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10814-5>
- Joseph, J. (2010). The limits of governmentality: Social theory and the international. *European journal of international relations*, 16(2), 223-246.
- Larue, B. (2021). COVID-19 and labor issues: An assessment. *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics/Revue canadienne d'agroeconomie*, 69(2), 269-279.
- Lazar, M. M. (2007). Feminist critical discourse analysis: Articulating a feminist discourse praxis. *Critical discourse studies*, 4(2), 141-164.
- Lerohl, M. L., & Unterschultz, J. R. (2000). Agriculture in Canada: Who will grow the food? (No. 1841-2016-152291).
- Lu, Y. (2020). The distribution of temporary foreign workers across industries in Canada.
- Luke, A. (1997). Theory and practice in critical discourse analysis. *International encyclopedia of the sociology of education*, 8, 50-57.
- Maleková, D. (2013). Representation of Social Actors in the Genre of the Institutional Press Release: A Study of Headlines. *Ostrava Journal of English Philology*, 5(2).

- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., & Pellegrino, A. (1998). *Worlds in motion: understanding international migration at the end of the millennium: understanding international migration at the end of the millennium*. Clarendon Press.
- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1994). An Evaluation of International Migration Theory: The North American Case. *Population and Development Review*, 20(4), 699–751.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2137660>
- McGregor, S. L. (2004). Critical discourse analysis: A primer. *Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM*, 15(1). Retrieved from
http://www.kon.org/archives/forum/forum_archives.html
- McLaughlin, J., Wells, D., Mendiburo, A., Lyn, A., & Vasilevska, B. (2017). ‘Temporary workers’, temporary fathers: Transnational family impacts of Canada’s seasonal agricultural worker program. *relations industrielles/industrial relations*, 72(4), 682-709.
- Mullet, D. R. (2018). A general critical discourse analysis framework for educational research. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 29(2), 116-142.
- Murray Li, Asch, M., Coombe, R. J., Couillard, M.-A., & Lanoue, G. (2007). Governmentality. *Anthropologica (Ottawa)*, 49(2), 275–281.
- Otero, G. (2019). Migration or immigration? commentary on Leigh Binford's press release. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 43(4).
- Preibisch, K. (2007). Local Produce, Foreign Labor: Labor Mobility Programs and Global Trade Competitiveness in Canada. *Rural Sociology*, 72(3), 418-449.

- Preibisch, K. (2010). Pick-Your-Own Labor: Migrant Workers and Flexibility in Canadian Agriculture¹. *The International Migration Review*, 44(2), 404-441.
- Province of Nova Scotia. (2020). Investments to Protect Farm Workers. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57547/canada-and-ontario-supporting-farmers-through-enhanced-insurance-protection>
- Qualman, D., & Tait, F. (2004). The Farm Crisis, Bigger Farms and the Myths of "Competition" and "Efficiency". Canadian Centre Policy Alternatives.
- Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2016). Archived - Published plans and annual reports 2017-2018: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Retrieved July 4, 2022, from https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2017-2018-ministry-agriculture-food-and-rural-affairs?_ga=2.71351514.879642451.1655848413-1315367077.1655848413
- Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2019). Continuing the Conversation on Mental Health in Agriculture. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <http://omafra.gov.on.ca/english/infores/releases/2019/jan-18.htm>
- Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2019). Listening to Help Small Food Processors Do Business. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/52469/listening-to-help-small-food-processors-do-business>
- Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Canada and Ontario Invest in Cattle Industry Competitiveness. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/55845/canada-and-ontario-invest-in-cattle-industry-competitiveness>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Canada and Ontario Support Beef and Hog Farmers During COVID-19. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57243/canada-and-ontario-support-beef-and-hog-farmers-during-covid-19>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Canada and Ontario Supporting Agri-food Sector Supply Chain During COVID-19. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58144/governments-help-ontario-food-processors-become-more-innovative-and-competitive>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Canada and Ontario Supporting Farmers through Enhanced Insurance Protection. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/57547/canada-and-ontario-supporting-farmers-through-enhanced-insurance-protection>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Canada and Ontario Take Steps to Further Protect Farm Workers. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/56946/canada-and-ontario-take-steps-to-further-protect-farm-workers>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Governments Help Ontario Farmers Bring High-Quality Products to Market. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58325/governments-help-ontario-farmers-bring-high-quality-products-to-market>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Governments Help Ontario Food Processors become more Innovative and Competitive. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58144/governments-help-ontario-food-processors-become-more-innovative-and-competitive>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Governments Support Beef Farmers and Protect Food Supply Chains. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59780/governments-support-beef-farmers-and-protect-food-supply-chains>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2020). Ontario Celebrates Innovation with the 2020 Excellence in Agriculture Awards. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58666/ontario-celebrates-innovation-with-the-2020-excellence-in-agriculture-awards>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Governments Advancing Career Choice in Ontario's Agri-food Sector. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001018/governments-advancing-career-choice-in-ontarios-agri-food-sector>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Governments Advancing Career Choice in Ontario's Agri-food Sector. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001018/governments-advancing-career-choice-in-ontarios-agri-food-sector>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Governments Supporting Economic Recovery of Ontario Farmers. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000573/governments-supporting-economic-recovery-of-ontario-farmers>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Ontario Improving Farm Safety for Agri-Food Workers. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60353/ontario-improving-farm-safety-for-agri-food-workers>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Ontario Investing in Agri-Food Innovation. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000755/ontario-investing-in-agri-food-innovation>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Ontario Invests in Agri-Food Research to Strengthen Sector. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000702/ontario-invests-in-agri-food-research-to-strengthen-sector>

Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Ontario Partnering with 4-H to Promote Agri-food Education. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000323/ontario-partnering-with-4-h-to-promote-agri-food-education>

- Queen's Printer for Ontario. (2021). Ontario Supporting Agri-Food Sector with New Labour Strategy. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000091/ontario-supporting-agri-food-sector-with-new-labour-strategy>
- Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., & Joseph, G. O. G. (2005). Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature. *Review of educational research*, 75(3), 365-416.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge university press.
- Rose, N., O'malley, P., & Valverde, M. (2006). Governmentality. *Annual review of law and social science*, 2, 83-104.
- Sharma, N. (2001). On being not Canadian: The social organization of "migrant workers" in Canada. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 38(4), 415-439.
- Sharma, N. R. (2006). *Home economics: Nationalism and the making of migrant workers' in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.
- Statistics Canada. (2014). Snapshot of Canadian agriculture. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/ca-ra2006/press-releases/snapshot-portrait-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2017). Canadian agriculture: Evolution and innovation. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2017006-eng.htm>

- Statistics Canada. (2021). The Daily — Agriculture and agri-food labour statistics, 2020. Retrieved July 7, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210517/dq210517b-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2021). The Daily — Canada's Agriculture Day: Celebrating the work of farmers with statistics. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210223/dq210223c-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2022). Actual hours worked by industry, annual. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410003701>
- Statistics Canada. (2022). Direct payments to agriculture producers. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3210010601>
- Statistics Canada. (2022). Temporary foreign workers in the agriculture and agri-food sectors, by industry. Retrieved July 7, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3210021801>
- Summit of Americas. (2000, 04 07). INDEX OF DOCUMENTS OF THE XVIII SIRG MEETING. Retrieved from Summit of Americas: <http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/2000/XVIII/XVIII-SIRG-MAIN.htm>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & society*, 4(2), 249-283.
- Vosko, L. (2018). Legal but Deportable: Institutionalized Deportability and the Limits of Collective Bargaining among Participants in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 71(4), 882-907.

- Vosko, L. F. (2013). National sovereignty and transnational labour: the case of Mexican seasonal agricultural workers in British Columbia, Canada. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 44(5-6), 514-532.
- Weedon. (1997). *Feminist practice & poststructuralist theory* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishers.
- Willig, C. (2014). Interpretation and analysis. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*, 481. Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse-historical approach. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 1, 63-94.
- Wodak, R. (2011). Critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. *Discursive pragmatics*, 8, 50-70.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory and methodology. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 2, 1-33.
- World Bank. (2006). At home and away: Expanding job opportunities for Pacific Islanders through labour mobility.
- Xiong, L. (2015, June). Design of News Release System. In *2015 International Conference on Management, Education, Information and Control* (pp. 265-273). Atlantis Press.
- Zhang, Y., Ostrovsky, Y., & Arsenault, A. (2021). Foreign workers in Canadian agriculture. Statistics Canada.