



April 20, 2020

Honourable Minister McNaughton
Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
9th Flr, 400 University Ave
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7
Via Email: ministry.MLTSD@ontario.ca

Dear Minister McNaughton,

We are writing to bring to your immediate attention an urgent matter related to your ministry's pending Temporary Foreign Agricultural Workers inspection initiative.

Late last week, our association was made aware of the initiative, and on late Friday afternoon we were informed that the initiative would possibly involve officers requesting to enter into quarantined areas on farms where recently arrived temporary foreign workers (TFWs) are completing their mandatory 14-day self-isolation period. We were further advised that these requests to enter quarantined areas may be made as early as April 21st.

While the information we have available to us about the TFAW Initiative is not 100% certain, we believe the matter is urgent enough to warrant immediate action to ensure a prudent approach to TFW safety is taken.

First, we estimate that up to 3 out of 4 TFWs who have arrived since the travel ban was lifted will still be in quarantine/self-isolation as of April 21st. This means that about 75% of inspector visits to on-farm housing e.g. bunkhouses would have the potential to breach quarantine.

Second, only approximately 25% of the arrivals since the travel ban was lifted will be in an active workplace setting, since the remainder will be in quarantine. This means that inspectors will be inspecting inactive workplaces or workplaces that are far less active than they will be once workers come out of quarantine in the coming weeks.

Third, on-farm housing, including the dwellings where TFWs complete their quarantine, are subject to oversight and inspections by local health units who have superior expertise in COVID-19 related risk assessments and in guiding and advising on related risk-mitigation measures.

Finally, we are greatly concerned that the introduction of potentially hundreds of officers into agricultural workplaces represents a great risk of these movements acting as disease vectors to Ontario farms at a time where Premier Ford has instructed all Ontarians and businesses to minimize the amount

of contact in general. Our growers are going out of their way to make sure TFWs' contact to the rest of Ontario is limited or eliminated, including bringing food onto farms so that TFW travel off site can be avoided.

At a time where many farms are already one month behind on growing a secure food supply for Ontarians due to the delay in TFW arrivals, **we therefore urge you to reconsider the imminent launch of the TFAW initiative.**

We have already been in touch with your office and have made it clear that we fully support the intent of keeping workers and the broader public safe, including from the risk of COVID-19. We are prepared to help you promote workplace safety through our direct channels to growers and in partnership with industry leaders like the WSPS and the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council. We just ask that your ministry reconsider the timelines and the scope (e.g. quarantined housing) of its planned TFAW Initiative.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this urgent matter. Should you have any questions or need any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,



Bill George Jr.
Chair, OFVGA



Ken Forth, Chair, OFVGA Labour Section
Chair, Labour Issues Coordinating Committee
President, FARMS



Keith Currie
President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Ed Scharringa
President,
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

Cc:

Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Philippe Masse, Director General, Employment and Social Development Canada