

**Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs**

Office of the Minister

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**Ministère de l'Agriculture, de
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Ontario

November 6, 2020

His Worship Nelson Santos
Mayor
Town of Kingsville
nsantos@kingsville.ca

Dear Mayor Santos:

Thank you and your delegation for meeting with me during the 2020 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference. I am very glad that we were able to make accommodations, in the face of our respective COVID-19 challenges, to meet virtually to address municipalities' concerns.

I want to assure you of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' and my own renewed commitment to working with you to strengthen and build your community.

While the health and well-being of every person in Ontario, including temporary foreign workers, is this government's number one priority, I recognize the importance of the federal government's Temporary Foreign Worker Program to Ontario's farming communities, including those in the Windsor-Essex region.

Ontario is working collaboratively with its municipal, provincial and federal partners and the farming community to help farmers protect their workers and stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes enhanced testing, education and guidelines for farmers and workers and increased inspections of agri-food businesses. We're also providing up to \$15 million through the Agri-Food Workforce Protection Program to help the sector enhance health and safety measures to better protect agri-food workers.

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development also provided over 130 health and safety guidance documents that include help for farmers to protect their workers and comply with occupational health and safety regulations.

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In addition, the federal government has announced a number of supports to businesses to offset the various challenges due to COVID-19, including increased credit availability to the agriculture sector, a small and medium-sized enterprise loan guarantee program and providing up to \$1500 per worker to help cover the costs of the mandatory 14-day isolation period when workers arrive in Canada. Individual agricultural businesses would need to check federal eligibility requirements to see if they qualify.

Staff from my Ministry have been working hard to further understand the concerns around building and fire codes and how they impact your ability to meet the federal requirements for TFW housing. We understand that the federal government intends to review the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and we look forward to opportunities to contribute to that review.

I want to thank you for providing your thoughts on this critical issue with me today. Please accept my best wishes for continued safety and health, for both you and the members of your community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernie Hardeman', with a large, stylized initial 'E' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Ernie Hardeman

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs