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Hon. Carla Qualtrough
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
140 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, QC K1A 0J9

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Dear Minister Qualtrough:

We are concerned about the COVID-19 infections of Canada's migrant workers here in Ontario and the substantial discrepancies between what your government recommends for their safety at work on Ontario's farms and greenhouses and what the Government of Ontario proposes. It's been clear for some time that measures to protect these workers have been woefully inadequate. As Minister responsible for the Temporary Foreign Worker program, you should be ready to take action if the Ontario government's measures fail to protect these workers and public health.

The *Globe and Mail* reported today that at a briefing for the Temporary Foreign Workers program, you suggested that workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 are not to continue to work at their jobs as migrant agricultural workers. This statement is at odds with the recommendations of the Province of Ontario, which has recommended these asymptomatic workers continue to work, provided they remain separated from non-infected workers.

These discrepancies between Ontario and the federal government have ramifications not just for the workers themselves, who very often have a language barrier, but also for the agricultural sector businesses that employ them. Workers desperately need protection and the lack of clear directives and consistent messaging, at a time when everyone needs to be working together, is a recipe for disaster.

We need to ensure that COVID-19 positive migrant workers are rehoused offsite so that they may properly isolate. We also need to coordinate and fund the PPE and access to sanitation every worker deserves. And, finally we need to make clear in communications to every worker that they are ensured paid sick days so they may take leave when ill without worrying about losing their livelihood.

As always, we are open to working constructively with your government to ensure safety of our workers, our food supply, and public health. Ontarians depend on this cooperation.

Sincerely,

Andrea Horwath,
Leader Official Opposition, New Democrats

John Vanthof
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