

March 8, 2016

Dear Mr. Gilchrist:

Thank you for your recent letters about the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*. I appreciate your comments and input on behalf of the Alberta Oat Growers Commission. This is an important issue to our government, as we are bringing the protection and compensation of non-family farm and ranch employees in line with what workers in all other sectors in Alberta already have. Similar rules are already in place for farm and ranch workers in other provinces, where family farms continue to thrive.

So far, what we can advise is that the new rules will apply to farms and ranches that employ waged workers who are neither owners nor family members of the owners. The legislation currently affects the following areas:

- Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) coverage began on January 1, 2016. Farms and ranches will have until April 30, 2016, to register with WCB.
- Employers must meet the basic Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) requirement to provide a safe and healthy workplace.
- Workers will be able to refuse unsafe work that presents an imminent danger.
- Occupational Health and Safety will be able to investigate serious injuries and fatalities.

As you know, our government is establishing six technical working groups to consult on the development of employment standards regulations, OHS standards, and labour relations legislation. These technical working groups will specifically address Employment Standards Code, Labour Relations Code, OHS Existing Requirements and Exceptions, OHS Best Practices for Agriculture, and OHS Education, Training and Certification. The technical working groups will be made up of representatives from the agricultural sector, labour groups, and technical experts. Each technical working group will be chaired by an independent and impartial individual with demonstrated mediation, consensus, and board governance experience.

The working groups of stakeholders and experts will be making recommendations on how employment standards, OHS, and labour relations requirements should be applied. These technical working groups will provide an opportunity for a broad and diverse range of voices from the farming and ranching sector to help us get this right, while at the same time ensuring paid workers come home safely at the end of each day.

The most up-to-date information and updates on our progress and work at the consultation tables will be provided on Farm and Ranch website, <http://www.alberta.ca/farm-and-ranch.cfm>.

Sincerely,

Oneil Carlier
Minister
Agriculture and Forestry