

January 20, 2011

The Hon. Thomas Lukaszuk
Alberta Employment and Immigration
#418 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Lukaszuk:

Three Alberta farm workers have died in recent weeks in workplace accidents, one at a farm in the Harmony Valley region in northern Alberta this month and two on a farm southeast of Edmonton last month.

There can be no clearer evidence that farms are industrial worksites like any other and that paid farm workers need the full protection of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the *Workers' Compensation Act*. These tragic accidents underline the absurdity of paid farm workers being excluded from the protection that other Albertans enjoy.

We continue to urge the inclusion of all workers under legislation as the only equitable course of action. In 2008, after investigating the workplace death of Kevan Chandler, Justice Peter Barley recommended that farm workers be included in Alberta's legislation to prevent future workplace injuries and deaths.

We note that in the recent deaths Occupational Health and Safety inspectors have been unable to conduct investigations due to the continuing exemption of paid farm workers from the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. It is inconsistent to say the province wants to improve farm safety when it does not investigate accidents to establish how they happened.

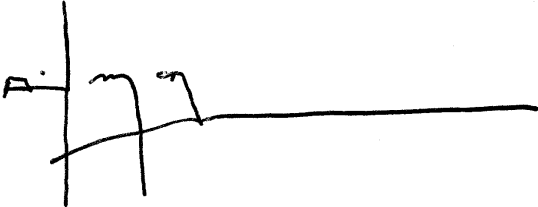
Therefore, we request that the *Farming and Ranching Exemption* be amended to allow for investigations into all farm-related deaths, serious injuries, or injuries involving a child. This could be accomplished by extending section 38 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which permits a Minister to convene a board of inquiry into the circumstance of an accident, to apply to the farming and ranching industries.

This change to the *Farming and Ranching Exemption* could be accomplished by a simple Order-in-Council and would result in a legal avenue for investigations into serious incidents involving paid farm workers. The information that would be obtained from these investigations would be invaluable in preventing future deaths and serious injuries on Alberta's farms.

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We reiterate that paid farm workers must be fully protected by all relevant workplace safety and workers' compensation legislation. That means that all exemptions for farm workers must be removed from the Occupational Health and Safety Code.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gil McGowan', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gil McGowan, President
Alberta Federation of Labour