



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

July 20, 2020

Statement regarding the Coordination of the Windsor/Essex and Chatham-Kent Response to COVID-19

Aspects of the local outbreaks of COVID -19 in Windsor/Essex and Chatham-Kent are related to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) which support local agricultural industries. These are Federal programs.

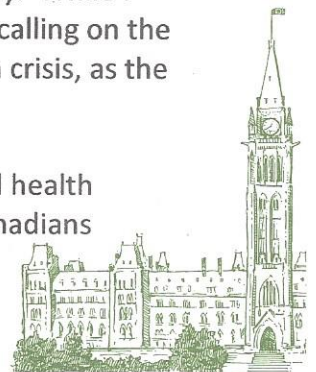
In addition, undocumented workers are also a part of the local workforce, and their existence relate to issues with Immigration/Asylum Processes and Canadian Border Services and these too are Federal responsibilities.

No doubt there will be changes moving forward on a longer term basis, potentially including a pathway to citizenship, bunkhouse specifications, testing procedures as a condition of employment, etc. so as to prevent future outbreaks and improve conditions for our legal guest workers. I trust that the industry has been engaged by the Federal government to address any changes contemplated to these important programs, and address potential undocumented workers crossing our borders into Canada. In short, the industry must be at the decision table to ensure the greatest collaboration and success.

However, in the short term, the outbreak needs to be managed, as testing, tracing, isolation and treatment need to continue as quickly as possible to allow our community to join the rest of the country in the phased re-opening of our economy. The Mayor of Leamington identified the need for one provincial entity to be responsible for leading the local response. It is a response which challenges all levels of government to better coordinate their jurisdictions into one consistent, representative and authoritative oversight and address the confusion and mixed messages coming from various entities with some level of jurisdiction.

While the impact to our economy is immense, COVID 19 remains primarily a health issue, and the health of our Canadian and guest worker populations must remain the priority. While I respect municipal and provincial jurisdictions, I agree with Mayor MacDonald in calling on the province to step forward to direct the full local response to the immediate health crisis, as the authority for health decisions lies within provincial jurisdiction.

The responsibility of COVID testing of Canadians and guest workers is a provincial health responsibility. Once undocumented citizens are employed in Ontario, just as Canadians





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become employed, the management of these labour relationship lie with the Provincial Ministry of Labour. I support the Mayor's July 20th call to make COVID testing a condition of employment.

I will continue to engage discussions on all federal responsibilities (TFWP, SAWP, Immigration, Canadian Border Services Agency) holding this government to account, so that these programs do not further contribute to our communities and our local economy being further left behind the rest of the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Epp".

Dave Epp, MP
Chatham-Kent—Leamington

