



Bridging the Labour Gap

Federal Election 2021

TALKING POINTS:

When in doubt, think Connect (why is it important to YOU?), Contrast (what's missing?), Solve (how can the government/candidate help?)

- **Connect:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour gap in the horticulture sector was already becoming a crisis. The logistical challenges of bringing in foreign workers during the pandemic have posed a significant threat to food production and food security here in Canada, demonstrating just how essential these employees are for our food system.
- **Contrast:** From the farm gate to the dinner plate, our supply chain has incurred unprecedented additional costs to develop business plans and adopt new procedures to ensure the health and safety of workers and the public. These operational changes are necessary, but the associated costs cannot be sustainably absorbed by our sector as public health protocols will remain in place for months to come.
- **Solve:** The federal government must recognize the ongoing nature of increased costs our industry is assuming because of the pandemic and ensure critical supports are in place until the pandemic has ended, while also working to address the horticulture labour gap in the long-term.

OUR ASKS:

1. Will your party recognize the ongoing nature of increased costs growers are assuming due to the pandemic by committing to measures to help growers manage costs associated with housing reforms and health and safety requirements?
2. Will your party maintain access to the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy until the Public Health Agency of Canada has declared that the COVID-19 pandemic has ended?
3. Will your party commit to improving service standards and processing times for applications under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and the Agricultural Stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, including by working with source countries and implementing measures to further streamline the collection of biometrics as well as the visa and work permit application processes?

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

- **The seasonal and labour-intensive nature of many growing operations means that Canadian horticulture relies more heavily on international workers.** In fact, 43% of horticultural workers come from outside Canada, (compared to 17% for the rest of agriculture), and 61% of horticultural farmers hire foreign workers, (compared to 35% of the rest of agriculture).
- **Bridging the labour gap in the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable industry is critical to ensuring our success in both the short and longer term.** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour gap in horticulture was expected to increase to 46,500 jobs by 2025 – the largest labour gap in the agricultural sector.
- **From the farm gate to the dinner plate, businesses across the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain have developed business plans and new procedures to address the spread of COVID-19.** These operational changes are necessary to keep our essential supply chain open while fostering staff morale and keeping absenteeism low, but they have also led to an increase in operating costs that cannot sustainably be absorbed by our sector as public health protocols will remain in place for months to come, with an ongoing impact on domestic production.
- The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy has been a critical support for many in the fresh produce sector in helping to manage these costs.