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Ottawa releases migrant farm worker COVID-19 guidelines

News 09:02 AM by **Grant LaFleche** ([/niagarafalls-on-author/grant-lafleche/AE374DCB-0DA0-419D-B2AB-444368F94103/](#)) 
<mailto:grant.lafleche@niagaradailies.com>) The St. Catharines Standard

The federal government has released guidelines for how Canadian farms must do their part to contain the potentially deadly COVID-19 when thousands of migrant workers arrive in the country.

Last week Ottawa confirmed that some 60,000 international farm workers will be allowed through COVID-19 travel restrictions that have effectively closed the border to international visitors. These workers, an essential labour force that keeps Canadian farms operational, must self-isolate when they arrive in Canada, the federal government said.

However, the logistics of how farms — they often house workers in communal bunkhouses — would manage to isolate such a large workforce was not clear although some government MPs, **including Niagara Centre's Vance Badawey** (<https://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/news-story/9914305-farms-will-decide-how-to-isolate-migrant-workers-says-badawey/>), said the onus on ensuring property safety protocols are followed would fall on the farms.

The protocols sent to the agricultural sector over the weekend do just that, making farmers responsible for making worker living quarters appropriate for isolation.

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"The employer is responsible for regularly monitoring the health of workers who are self-isolating, as well as any employee who becomes sick after the self-isolation period," the guidelines say.

The document says farms are obligated to pay their workers their full wages while they are in isolation and that the full 14-day isolation period must be obeyed.

"The employer cannot authorize the worker to work during the self-isolation period, even if requested by the worker, with the exception of those deemed as providing an essential service by the chief public health officer," says the document.

"In addition, the employer cannot ask the worker to perform other duties during that period, such as building repairs or administrative tasks."

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If work becomes "symptomatic at any time," the farm must isolate a worker and call the local public health authority.

While workers can be isolated together, such accommodations have to allow them to stay two metres apart at all times. Shared facilities, such as bathrooms, must be cleaned and disinfected each day.

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"If this requirement cannot be met, alternate accommodations (e.g. hotel) may be required," the guidelines say. "In the best interest of all parties, it is recommended that date-stamped photos be taken of the facilities, including the bedroom, to demonstrate compliance."

The document also says the 14-day-isolation clock gets restarted to the day of each new arrival in a shared accommodation. That reset will apply to everyone living in the same space.

Workers in isolation also must be kept apart from anyone who is 65 or older or anyone with other medical issues.

The agricultural sector panicked when Ottawa locked down the borders to limit the spread of COVID-19 because the migrant workforce has become critical to Canadian farming operations, including grape growers in Ontario. The loss of that workforce would prevent crops from being planted and harvested.

Although the exceptions for migrant workers were announced last week, the delay in getting them into the country and the 14-day isolation period will mean some losses for the sector, industry associations have said.

Guidance for Employers of T... (https://www.scribd.com/document/453851106/Guidance-for-Employers-of-TFWs-on-COVID-19#from_embed) by **Grant LaFleche** (https://www.scribd.com/user/95451357/Grant-LaFleche#from_embed) on Scribd

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