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# Fourth migrant farm worker dies from COVID-19 in Ontario, advocacy group says

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Workers do maintenance at the Scotlynn Group near Vittoria, Ont., in Norfolk County on Wednesday, June 3, 2020. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Nathan Denette

TORONTO -- A fourth migrant farm worker has died in Ontario after contracting COVID-19, an advocacy group says.

Fausto Ramirez Plazas died in hospital this week after testing positive for the virus

during his mandatory quarantine period, Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC) said in a press release on Friday.

The member-led organization of migrants said Plazas arrived in Canada from Mexico on April 22nd and tested negative on his mandatory pre-travel COVID-19 test.

He also tested negative again when he arrived in Toronto at Pearson International Airport.

Plazas and his two co-workers were then placed in a hotel room together for their mandatory 14-day quarantine by their employer Procyk Farms, MWAC said.

After taking a follow-up test on day 10 of their quarantine, Plazas and his coworkers tested positive for the virus.

Plazas was then transferred to a hospital in Brantford and died from the virus on Thursday, MWAC said.

It is unknown how long Plazas was hospitalized before his death.

Plazas is the fourth confirmed migrant farm worker to die from COVID-19 in Ontario during the pandemic, and the fifth migrant employee in Canada to die during the mandatory quarantine period this year alone, MWAC said.

The organization argues that the government isn't doing enough to protect migrant workers during the pandemic, and specifically during their mandatory quarantine period.

"Only permanent immigration status will give workers the power to protect themselves from bad working conditions and from COVID. These workers are dying in quarantine mandated by the federal government, which means they are dying on the federal government's watch," Farm Worker Organizer with MWAC Luisa Ortíz said in a statement.

Last year, migrant workers were significantly affected by the pandemic as 8.7 per cent of these workers tested positive for the virus in Ontario.

Many of these essential workers are susceptible to the virus as they often live and work in crowded settings, and are unable to speak up about poor work conditions due to language barriers and precarious immigration status.

The MWAC is demanding that the federal government grant permanent immigration status for all migrant workers immediately, launch an investigation into all migrant worker deaths, provide compensation for families of the deceased and make changes to quarantine procedures to ensure workers are protected.

-With files from Reuters.

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