March 17, 2020

Dear Member of Parliament,

These are unprecedented times as the COVID-19 pandemic is constantly changing and evolving. We appreciate your leadership ensuring the health and safety of Canadians, as you work tirelessly to make decisions in the best interest of the country.

However, as an agriculture industry we are very concerned about the government’s decision that no seasonal workers will arrive in Canada effective March 18, 2020 at 12:01am. While we understand and fully support the government’s decision to close the borders to non-essential travel in an effort to lower the transmission of COVID-19, we respectfully ask that seasonal workers be considered essential travelers.

In 2019, Nova Scotia agriculture employed 1,500 foreign workers. Our industry depends on these skilled workers, many of whom return to the same farms year after year. These workers also rely on the Temporary Foreign Worker program and the Seasonal Agricultural Worker programs to support their families.

Without access to this labour our farms will face significant challenges this year in planting crops, which in turn will have an impact on our ability to provide safe, high quality food for Canadians.

As an industry we are committed to working with government to ensure the proper protocols are in place to minimize the risk associated with bringing these workers into Canada for the season.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. For more information, please feel free to call the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture at (902) 893-2293.

Sincerely,

Nova Scotia Farmer