

# BC Fruit Growers' Association

## Friday File

March 30, 2020

### Federal SAWP Protocols

Some clarity, but more requirements to be met yet

The federal government announced [the protocols for Temporary Foreign Workers](#), dated March 27 and released March 28. All newly arrived TFWs will be subject to the following rules:

- A 14 day isolation period for newly arrived workers.
- House self-isolating workers in accommodations that are separate from those not subject to self-isolation.
- If new workers arrive and are placed in accommodation with previously-arrived workers, **ALL** workers in the accommodation will start a new 14 day isolation period.
- Workers in self-isolation may be housed together, but with a two meter separation, including beds.
- Shared facilities for the group of self-isolating workers are allowed, provided there are sufficient space requirements and regular sanitation and a sanitation log is maintained. Workers can do the sanitation, as this is 'essential care' (part of personal hygiene).
- Pay a minimum 30 hours per week (except SAWP, which follows the contract of a minimum 40 hours work over the term of the employment. In the case of SAWP, employers should advance a minimum 30 hours of pay and recover the advance from subsequent pays).
- No work during the self-isolation period.
- Regular monitoring and recording of health.
- Post information on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the accommodation.
- Immediate isolation upon symptoms, and contact public health officials/consulates.
- Provide workers with appropriate hygiene supplies.
- Provide workers with COVID-19 information and training.
- Report employees who violate the Quarantine Act.
- Follow the latest public health requirements.

The BCFGA, BCAC, CHC and CFA will continue to seek improvements to the federal protocol to make it more practical while protecting public health.

The other barriers to starting up the SAWP program (reported in last edition), and are being worked on with urgency:

- The development of provincial health protocols - these are expected to be more detailed than the federal protocols.
- International Travel restrictions. Regularly scheduled flights are ending on March 31 (this Tuesday). Charter flights are the alternative being arranged by MiTierra. Coordinating full plane loads and delays in charting airplanes will cause delays.
- Employer preparation. Employers will likely need to have plans in place as part of the health protocols.

Any new travel restrictions (e.g. internal travel restrictions in the foreign country or in Canada) will, if introduced, be another barrier and cause delays in receiving SAWP workers.

### **COVID-19 Local and Backpacker Labour**

#### **Labour issues go beyond SAWP this year**

The recent focus of the BCFGAs has been on getting the border opened for TFWs and getting health protocols in place that work for growers and protect the health of Canadians. There will be fewer SAWP workers in the Okanagan compared to last year, simply due to restrictive health protocols and reduced airline/charter flights.

Another source of workers is the 'backpackers' from Quebec, as well as the young backpackers who come in on work visas from countries around the world. The latter, from other countries, remain under the travel ban. There is also concern not as many Quebecois youth will travel. This could lead to a significant shortage of workers for those growers who do not use SAWP.

Ron Forrest, our Labour Orientation and Safety Training Manager, returned a few days ago. Ron will be in contact with Quebecois youth to encourage their participation in the Okanagan tree fruit labour force this year. Ron Forrest will monitor the situation carefully.

Local workers may increasingly be an option this year, if agriculture can convince any capable, unemployed workers to work on the farm. Unemployed workers are being urged to check Job Bank for "Orchard jobs in the Okanagan", especially starting in mid-June. We are also looking into accessing the electronic job board for the restaurant industry.

Right now, Canadians are being advised to 'stay home' by the Prime Minister, so appeals to local workers will be easier when 'flattening the curve' is no longer needed.

There may be flexibility in transferring SAWP workers (sharing), and this could also help the anticipated worker shortage.

BCFGAs will be increasing our focus on reducing the labor shortage in the coming days and weeks. The BCFGAs Labour Committee will be activated to address COVID-19 safety protocols, come up with solutions to a labour shortage, and to monitor the labour market in agriculture.

It will be a challenging year to get adequate labour.

## **Survey on COVID-19**

### **Your input important and appreciated**

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture is seeking input from Canadian farmers and ranchers through weekly surveys to identify any issues caused by the COVID-19 outbreak that are affecting your farm businesses.

The survey information gathered weekly will help inform communications as agricultural organizations work with the federal government to support Canadian agriculture throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Complete this week's survey (link below) by **Thursday, April 2nd at 9 a.m. PST**. A new survey will be available each Monday morning as the pandemic continues.

[The Weekly CFA Survey](#)

## **COVID-19 Province-Wide Burning Ban**

### **For smoke sensitive areas (areas with moderate to high residential density)**

COVID-19 impacts lung health, so the province has instituted a province-wide ban on open burning, effective last Thursday. Growers have been in contact with the BCTFC field service and the BCFGA regarding a reversal of this ban for orchards. Reversing the just-announced ban is highly unlikely at this time of heightened focus on health care and COVID-19.

BCFGA will be asking the province to assist with grinding services and expenses for landfill transport and disposal fees.

## **COVID-19 Information**

Of many sources, here are some basic, relevant sites and webpages

[HealthLinkBC](#)- Information available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Punjabi](#)  
[Public Health Canada - COVID-19](#)  
[Ag SafeBC Covid-19 Best Practices Advice](#)  
[AgSafeBC Covid-19 documents, signs, and procedures](#))  
[WorksafeBC](#)

These websites provide information on how to monitor, what actions to take if detected, and getting an action plan in place in advance of a COVID-19 infection.

## BCFGA Office

### Covid-19 restrictions

We are temporarily closing access to the BCFGGA office during the Covid-19 emergency. Most of our staff are working from home. Please call (250-762-5226, or toll-free 1-800-619-9022) or [email](#) us if you need to communicate with us. We encourage members to contact BCFGGA staff and directors by telephone or email.

### BCFGA 2020 Board of Directors

Name		Cell/Text
Pinder Dhaliwal - President	Oliver	250-490-7198
Peter Simonsen - VP	Naramata	250-488-0363
Ravinder Bains	Keremeos	250-499-0512
Sukhdeep (Deep) Brar	Summerland	250-462-5687
Avi Gill	Kelowna	778-990-9737
Sukhdev Goraya	Kelowna	250- 859-1229
Talwinder Bassi	Oliver	250-485-7272
David Dobernigg	Vernon	250-550-8999

**Meetings and Events** - check the [BCFGGA Calendar](#) on our website for more information

Date	Meeting	Details
March 31	BCFGGA Board conference call	
April 5	BCFGGA Board conference call	BCFGGA Board is meeting minimum once per week on Thursday evening during the current COVID-19 emergency.
April 8	Tree Fruit Production Guide annual review <b>Cancelled.</b> We are investigating rescheduling the in-person meeting as a webinar.	Creston