

**Ontario
Cattlemen's
Association**

Committed to Cattlemen

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February 29, 2012

Temporary Foreign Worker Program
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
P.O. Box 6500
L.C.D. Downsview A
Toronto, ON M3M 3K4

Chisanga Puta-Chekwe, Deputy Minister
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
6th floor, 400 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M7A 2R9

Dear Sir or Madame,

RE: Improved Temporary Foreign Worker program

Canada's agriculture sector has identified the availability of labour as a potential competitiveness issue vital to the survival and growth of food-producing businesses. Cattle production has an industry-specific shortage for interested and skilled workers, and this shortage is expected to grow in the near future.

Although feedlots and other cattle operations have historically experienced consistently low employee turnover rates, the economic boom in the mining, oil and construction sectors has placed tremendous pressure on sourcing new employees. Livestock operations need people who are competent and qualified, not necessarily achieved through formal education, with an aptitude to provide the type of care required. Many beef cattle operations have attempted to source temporary foreign workers after failing to attract employees at the domestic level. Not many Canadian-born workers aspire to work in cattle production if they are not already involved in their family operation.

The Temporary Foreign Worker program has been an employment option which is difficult to use and costly to participate in. Since the program involves two federal departments and a foreign embassy, it requires clear logistical steps without red-tape impediments. At times the process can take six months to complete and the cost to business is significant. Agriculture needs its own categories, protocols and processes to allow businesses to utilize this resource and to survive and thrive.

Challenges in particular include:

- Long processing times for labour market opinions and work permit applications
- Misunderstanding by government staff on employer requirements and job classifications
- Requirement for fluent English in positions where less relevant to the job
- Perception that workers are not treated well- perpetuated by labour groups without any understanding of the cattle sector
- Setting of unrealistic wage rates based on the oil and gas sector, not relevant to the beef cattle sector or to the individual job requirements
- The need for work permits which are 2-4 years in length, in order to recoup the cost/time required to successfully place a foreign employee in the job

The cattle industry goes to great lengths to source qualified individuals who want to work in the cow/calf and feedlot sectors. These positions are skilled and sector-specific – vastly different from unqualified manual labour for picking fruit in the horticulture sector. Employees will manage expensive equipment and inputs and, in particular, aptitude is important when working with live animals. In addition, the cattle operation often has to supply housing, food and at times, other benefits such as a vehicle. The oil sector does not supply these extras.

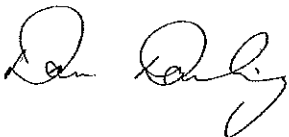
Many of the cattle sector jobs are in rural communities which provide a lower cost lifestyle and a welcoming environment. Employers are keen to offer opportunities to family members of these workers, however there are impediments to success. There should be an opportunity in mutually successful employment situations for temporary foreign workers to be strongly considered within provincial immigrant nominee programs. While each province has a different nominee program, there is growing awareness that there are nearly double the job positions (demand) than nominee positions available in major cattle-producing regions.

Domestic labour growth and unemployed persons will not fill the need. What exists now does not come close to filling the need. Studies by the Canadian Agriculture Human Resources Council indicate there is widespread recognition that traditional agriculture labour sources are inadequate. Canada's primary agricultural producers expect to require an additional 50,000 non-seasonal and 38,000 seasonal workers by 2013. In fact, the seasonal jobs are quickly becoming year-round jobs and must be filled or businesses will no longer exist.

In order to address these challenges in a timely manner that will facilitate growth of the agriculture economy, efforts between departments must be coordinated not fragmented. There is a tendency to study the issue, while target objectives disappear and timelines are not identified. Please help the cattle industry work with all levels of governments to address these important issues. We want to be able to continue to provide meaningful jobs that allow us to supply a quality food product to Canadian consumers.

Please contact us at your earliest convenience to discuss further. We look forward to your response on this issue of major importance to the cattle sector and the Canadian economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Darling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" and the last name "Darling" clearly distinguishable.

Dan Darling
President

cc: Canadian Cattlemen's Association

Ministry of Citizenship
and Immigration

Deputy Minister

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March 16, 2012

Mr. Dan Darling
President
Ontario Cattlemen's Association
130 Malcolm Road
Guelph, ON N1K 1B1

Dear Mr. Darling,

Thank you for your letter of February 29th regarding Ontario's cattle industry and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. As this program is coordinated through the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation, I have taken the liberty of forwarding your letter to Wendy Tilford, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. She will be able to respond to your concerns.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chisanga Puta Chekwe", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chisanga Puta Chekwe
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

cc. Wendy Tilford, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation