

News Release

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Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is the clear top priority in managing COVID-19, so the Government of Canada is working very closely with provinces, territories and stakeholders to maintain the strength of Canada's food supply chain. Before the pandemic, the food sector was already challenged by significant labour shortages and it is anticipated there will be even more jobs to fill, requiring a variety of skills.

In many regions across Canada, producing a variety of quality foods to be sold at affordable prices relies upon the contributions of experienced temporary foreign workers right from planting season to harvest—particularly for fresh fruits and vegetables. Fish, seafood and meat processing plants are also reliant on the addition of these workers.

This is an important reason why the Government of Canada granted an exemption for temporary foreign workers from travel restrictions to Canada, along with other foreigners with student and work visas, provided they adhere to a strict 14-day isolation protocol upon arrival.

The rules of the mandatory isolation period have been clearly defined and distributed to the employers, who themselves are committed to protecting the health of their communities and their workers. Government authorities will continue to proactively communicate and engage with employers, source countries and other stakeholders on public health requirements. Those who do not comply with the Quarantine Act or the isolation protocol will face severe fines and sanctions. Under proposed changes, employers could also face significant penalties, and a possible ban from the program, if they prevent adherence to the self-isolation order.

In addition to the responsibility of paying the workers for the two weeks during which time they cannot work, many employers are also responsible for providing workers with transportation and accommodations, as well as access to food and basic supplies needed to meet all of the conditions imposed by public health authorities.

Recognizing the importance of this responsibility, the federal government will provide support of \$1,500 for each temporary foreign worker, to employers or those working with them to ensure requirements are fully met. The funding is conditional on employers not being found in violation of the mandatory 14-day isolation protocols or any other public health order. This program will be available as long as the *Quarantine Act* is in force and the isolation protocol is followed.

As labour circumstances are different across regions in Canada, the Government will work with interested provinces and territories in the coming days to ensure this funding is delivered in a manner that meets their needs and best ensures quarantine requirements are met.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri-food/news/2020/04/keeping-canadians-and-workers-in-the-food-supply-chain-safe.html>