



**SYNOD OF
ALBERTA
AND THE
TERRITORIES**
Incorporated as Alberta Synod

The Office of the Bishop

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Partnerships***

May 7, 2020

Honourable Jason Kenney - Premier
May 7, 2020

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premier@gov.ab.ca

Dear Premier Kenney:

The vital role that Foreign Migrant Workers have played in Alberta's economy predates the COVID-19 pandemic by many years. Filling labor shortages under conditions that few Canadians are willing to accept, migrant workers have long been essential to the industries that grow, process, and package our nation's food supply.

In recent weeks, the vulnerabilities faced by this vital sector of our economy have come to light in Alberta as a result of COVID-19 outbreaks at the JBS meat packaging plant in Brooks, the Cargill meat packing plant in High River, and the Harmony Beef meat packing plant in Balzac. Among the vulnerabilities facing Foreign Migrant Workers in our province are a lack of access to health care and human service resources, inadequate workplace protections, and difficulty accessing benefits.

Initiatives that have lowered eligibility requirements for EI and new regulations to assure workplace safety have been positive steps in protecting this vital sector of Canada's labor force. Nonetheless, Foreign Migrant Workers in Alberta still struggle to obtain the same financial assistance and health and social service resources available to other Canadians. Access to such benefits and services is both a matter of justice and a necessary step in assuring the safety and well-being of Albertans.

As bishop of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, I call upon you to urge the Federal government to act immediately to grant permanent residency status to all migrant workers, thus assuring access to the same benefits and services afforded to all Canadians. In so doing, Canada will protect migrant workers in Alberta who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19 lay-offs or who must self-isolate as a result of the pandemic. This measure will also assure that workers who lose their jobs will not be deported, but will remain eligible to seek other work.

As a synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, we understand the call to seek a just and equitable society as inseparable from our faith in God. The equitable and fair treatment of the workers whose labour is so integral to our province's well-being is a tangible expression of our faith.

Sincerely,

+ Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories - Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

cc. Ms. Rachel Notley
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