



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

The Office of the Bishop

10014 - 81 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T6E 1W8

Ph: (780) 439-2636

Fax (780) 433-6623

Email: [info@albertasynod.ca](mailto:info@albertasynod.ca)

[www.albertasynod.ca](http://www.albertasynod.ca)

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May 7, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister  
[justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca](mailto:justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca)

The Honourable Marco Mendicino  
Minister of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada  
[Marco.Mendicino@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Marco.Mendicino@parl.gc.ca)

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau  
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food  
[Marie-Claude.Bibeau@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Marie-Claude.Bibeau@parl.gc.ca)

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough  
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion  
[Carla.Qualtrough@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Carla.Qualtrough@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers:

Foreign Migrant Workers have played a vital role in the Canadian economy long before the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.

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

As bishop of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, I call on 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 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 nation's well-being is a tangible expression of our faith.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Larry Kochendorfer". The signature is written in a cursive style and includes a small cross symbol at the beginning.

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