



A FARMER'S COMMITMENT:

**Putting food
on your table.
Keeping our
workers safe.**

Open letter to people of Grey, Bruce & Blue Mountains

We're Kyle and Greg Ardiel. We're cousins and our families are both apple growers in the Clarksburg area. Kyle's family grows apples predominantly for the fresh market, while Greg's family grows fresh and processing apples as well as pears and wine grapes.

Like it does for all Canadians, the pandemic means we're doing things differently on our farms this year in an effort to keep our local and international employees and our families safe.

After they arrive, all international workers complete two weeks of quarantine before they start work. We've created household units so that employees who live together also work together, they wear PPE, we've increased cleaning and sanitizing, and we have groceries brought in for them so they can keep their trips to town to a minimum.

We've also made a lot of changes to ensure proper physical distancing, including installing barriers, making changes to housing and adding more vehicles. It's certainly added a whole new layer of management and organization, as well as expense, this year.

Both of our farms hire international employees through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). This program has been in place between Canada and partner countries since the 1960s and is very strictly regulated. In order to participate in this program, we have to follow all the same regulations that we do when hiring local employees.

As with all SAWP employers, our employee housing is inspected regularly, and international workers on this program are subject to the same wage, health and job benefits and protections as local workers. This makes SAWP different from other temporary worker programs that are also open to other sectors, not just fruit and vegetable growers.

As the pandemic continues, our industry is learning more all the time about the virus and how it can affect anyone anywhere - and we're taking action to address and prevent issues as they come up. We've discovered, for example, that some recent farm outbreaks in Ontario were associated with unregulated local recruitment agencies whose contract workers moved from farm to farm.

We all can play our part in reducing community spread by limiting movement of local temporary workers from one farm to another and keeping local and international workers separate from each other.

It's also really important to help get workers tested and make sure they know they have rights for job and income protection if they have to go into isolation. And our industry organization, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, is working with all levels of government to provide COVID-19 health and safety guidelines and training for growers.

People sometimes forget that food has to be produced and the pandemic has highlighted that we can't always depend on other countries or regions to grow our food for us. We wouldn't be able to grow fruits and vegetables here without the help of international employees and thanks to SAWP, they're able to support their own families and communities back home.

We're proud to be Ontario farmers and proud of the part our farms and employees are playing in ensuring our food security.

Sincerely,
Kyle Ardiel & Greg Ardiel, apple growers
Clarksburg

