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News

April 20, 2020

Southwestern Public Health working with local growers to safely bring back seasonal workers in time for planting

Warm weather has arrived and with it comes important seasonal work by area growers

As a largely rural public health unit, Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) has long worked with area farmers on matters related to the health and safety of the seasonal workers that come to Elgin and Oxford Counties to assist with the growing season. That work takes prominence with spring's arrival. The region requires hundreds of extra workers to plant, maintain and eventually harvest local crops – all within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The economics of our region’s agricultural industry depend heavily on the arrival of seasonal workers. The federal government has made allowances for these workers under the Quarantine Act. They may still come to Canada to work, but they must follow a plan that is developed prior to their arrival by their employer, in partnership with SWPH,” says Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health

All workers are required to self-isolate and not work for a period of 14 days starting from their arrival in Canada. Employers must plan for accommodation that allows for physical distancing, provisions for groceries and necessary supplies while workers are self-isolating, what to do if a worker becomes ill, and appropriate cleaning supplies for disinfecting high touch surfaces.

SWPH has provided guidance documents and signage in English and in Spanish and will be in regular contact with farmers as questions arise.

Following the initial period of self-isolation, workers on farm will follow the same physical distancing expectations as Ontario residents.

“Southwestern Public Health has a long relationship with many of these farm operations,” adds Lock. “Our Public Health Inspectors regularly inspect seasonal housing and test water from farms. This year, we’re adding COVID-19 pandemic response messaging and guidelines to our ongoing communication with these local growers.”

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Social media and online content

- Website: www.swpublichealth.ca
- Facebook: Southwestern Public Health
- Twitter: [@SW_PublicHealth](https://twitter.com/SW_PublicHealth)
- Instagram: [@swpublichealth](https://www.instagram.com/swpublichealth)

About Southwestern Public Health

Southwestern Public Health works with its partners to ensure the health of the whole community. Our programs respond to public health emergencies; promote healthy lifestyles; help prevent injuries, illness and disease in the community; and promote positive change and social conditions that improve health. Southwestern Public Health delivers mandated programs under the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) and is regulated by the [Ontario Health Promotion and Protection Act](#). The health unit maintains primary locations in Woodstock and St. Thomas. For more information, visit www.swpublichealth.ca.

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