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## **RESPONSE TO IRCC CONSULTATION ON SAWP FAMILY PERMITS**

On behalf of the National Cattle Feeders' Association (NCFA) please accept this input regarding the IRCC consultation on the expansion of eligibility for open work permits to family members of agricultural temporary foreign workers (TFW) in the Low-Wage Stream of the TFW Program and the Agricultural Stream including the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP).

NCFA welcomes the opportunity to comment on this increasingly critical component of the TFW program. Prior to providing perspective on the questions posed by IRCC, we would like to provide two over-arching comments.

Firstly, it is important to understand how Canada's fed cattle industry utilizes TFWs. Generally, feedlot owners bring in foreign labour with a goal of creating permanent employees; so, the term "temporary foreign workers" is misleading. Feedlots utilize multiple approaches to bring in foreign employees based on the methods that are most effective for their operations. Even for feedlots using the SAWP program, good employees are brought back to Canada for multiple years. There are examples of Canadian feedlots employing foreign employees under the SAWP program for ten plus years.

These workers, while considered SAWP workers, are critical, long-term employees who would benefit from bringing their families with them. And employers wanting to retain productive employees see the value in the added expense and effort to bring the employee's family to Canada.

The second consideration is the altered designation of a *specialized livestock worker / farm machinery operator or a herds person* to a Tier 3 skill level. These employees require more than 6 months training to learn significant skills on how to properly work with animals, that range from 1,100 to 1,500 pounds in size, to ensure the safety of the worker and the animal. As well, their duties range in scope which requires additional training and skill in animal husbandry and machine operations.

Therefore, we recommend that the *specialized livestock worker / farm machinery operator or herds person* designation be moved from a Tier 4 to a Tier 3 (skill type B). This would not only better represent the level of skill and training for the position, but would also make allowances for feedlot Agriculture Stream and SAWP workers to bring in their families.

Below please find NCFA's response to the questions being posed within this consultation:

1. *What would be the potential benefits – to Canada, workers, relevant industry, employers, communities – of allowing family members to accompany the principal worker to Canada?*
  - Foreign employees being employed by feedlots under the Agriculture Stream or the SAWP generally remain in Canada for as long as their permit allows, and many return year after year or work towards their permanent residence. The ability to have their families join them while in Canada is extremely important for their mental health, especially when they initially arrive and may suffer from loneliness, depression and acclimatization to a different culture. This is not just a benefit for the employees, but also for the employers

who recognize that happy employees are more productive employees. Additionally, these employees are more likely to want to stay in Canada and eventually seek permanent residence.

- Many TFWs that have been able to bring in family members on an open work permit which means that these families are able to also seek employment in the respective feedlots and/or rural communities. This provides additional income for the TFWs, as well as a much-needed labour base for rural employers. In addition, it works to build a welcoming culture in rural Canada for other foreign employees.

2. *What challenges do you foresee for family members accompanying the principal worker to Canada?*

- The main challenge to bringing in the families of TFWs include the requirement for additional and the allowable rent under the respective programs can be a limitation.
- There is often a need for the feedlot to provide access to additional vehicles and support for workers/families to secure international driver's licences. This is especially true in rural settings where there is no access to public transportation to grocery stores, community centres, places of worship, etc.
- Additionally, for families arriving in Canada, there needs to be consideration given to providing childcare, schooling and language lessons, along with general considerations to adapting to a new environment/culture.

3. *What type of inquiries and/or support requests would your organization anticipate from the families of workers, if any?*

- Considerations on supports for foreign workers to Canada would be the same as any new immigrant arriving to Canada including learning English, adapting to the climate and culture, etc. Many feedlots have multiple foreign employees and so they work to create an inviting culture and provide mentorship or a buddy-system to help new TFWs acclimatize when they arrive.
- Additional complications of rural living would include, as mentioned above, the need for additional housing, vehicles, consideration for childcare and schooling, etc.
- Feedlots work to have training documents/manuals available in multiple languages, taking into consideration the languages spoken by the TFWs entering Canada to work on their farms.
- Several rural communities are offering courses for English as a second language, so additional government support for these programs would be beneficial.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. NCFAs comments are informed by its members who hire and support foreign workers on their feedlots. The general sentiment is that the cost and effort required to bring family members of good employees to Canada is worthwhile to entice good employees to stay and become a long-term member of their respective farm teams.

Please let us know if you would like to discuss these comments or have questions.

Sincerely,

Janice Tranberg  
President and CEO