

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'AGRICULTURE ET DE
L'AGROALIMENTAIRE**

BY EMAIL

Ottawa, Wednesday, June 7, 2023

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion

The Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Dear Ministers:

On May 8, 2023, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food held a meeting on the closure of the Olymel processing plant in Vallée-Jonction that was announced on April 14. At that meeting, the Committee heard the company's arguments and the concerns of groups representing pork producers. In addition, federal officials appeared to explain the measures the government has taken to meet the needs of farmers and businesses in the industry without interfering in their business decisions. I am writing to inform you of the Committee's findings and conclusions regarding the immigration issues raised by this closure.

Olymel reported that 122 temporary foreign workers employed at the Vallée-Jonction plant and stated that it would like to transfer a number of them to its other facilities elsewhere in Quebec. However, officials from your department said they will need a new Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) because the new workplace will be in a different economic region. Similarly, they have indicated that workers who have obtained a work permit for the Olymel plant in Beauce will have to start the process all over again if they wish to work for another employer in the same region. The Committee strongly believes that your two departments must work together to clarify the rights and options of the temporary foreign workers affected by the closure, and consider measures to facilitate their transfer to a new employer in the same region, acknowledging the current labor shortage. Likewise, given the precarious position of these workers, the Committee would like the new LMIA's and work permits to be processed as quickly as possible.

The Committee repeatedly heard that the process for obtaining an LMIA must be simplified and the time frame for securing work permits for workers throughout the agriculture and agri-food sector shortened. The labour shortage is chronic and lasting, and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is essential for farmers and processors to ensure their operations run properly. David Duval, President of the Éleveurs de porcs du Québec, said that businesses that hire temporary foreign workers should not have to go through the same process every year. He suggested simplifying, “the hiring, retention, but more importantly, the re-hiring of these foreign workers.” On April 13, 2022, as it was studying the agriculture and agri-food supply chain, the Committee received a [written response](#) from the Union des producteurs agricoles that proposed a simplified LMIA form. The Committee encourages you to work collaboratively to determine whether streamlining the form would be appropriate. In addition, the Committee urge you to work to decrease processing times for issuing work permits in light of the seasonal needs of agriculture.

The Olymel representatives cited the labour shortage as one of the reasons behind the closure of the Vallée-Jonction plant. The issues this closure raises show the concrete impacts of the chronic labour shortage on the sector and the key role the Temporary Foreign Worker Program plays in alleviating it. Accordingly, I encourage you to examine the Committee’s observations set out in this letter. Since the immigration issue extends well beyond this one event, I would once again like to invite you to appear before the Committee, in accordance with the motions adopted by the Committee on May 16th, September 26th and November 2nd, 2022, to discuss the issues surrounding the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the ways that immigration can support the success of Canada’s agriculture sector.

Yours sincerely,



Kody Blois, M.P. for Kings–Hants
Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food