

April 7, 2006

Golden Eagle Farm
20992 Thompson Road
Pitt Meadows, BC V3Y 1Z1

**LETTER OF CONCERN FROM THE MEXICAN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS OF THE
GOLDEN EAGLE GROUP FARM, PITT MEADOWS**

Through this letter we are asking for the prompt intervention of the relevant authorities given that many problems exist for us, the Mexican agricultural workers of the Golden Eagle Group farm, who feel disappointed and harmed, both morally and economically, with regards to the Seasonal Agricultural worker Program between Mexico and Canada. This is due to the fact that many irregularities exist at the job, some of which are for example in the economic aspect given that many of us had to get into debt to leave a little money for our families while we were beginning to make money to send them here in Canada.

Nevertheless, after living through the experience in this farm we realize that we are never going to prosper economically since they only give us a few hours of work because the company does not authorize more than 8 hours a day of work; but the worst problem is that in this region it rains a lot and sometimes there is snow and a lot of cold and as a result we often can't work more than 2 or 4 hours a day and sometimes none. On the other hand the work days are very difficult and the salary of \$8.60 an hour does not compensate for the effort and the risk of illness to which we are exposed.

As a consequence of the weather some workers get sick with a cold or cough because we did not bring adequate clothing to work in this weather, and the company did not give us raincoats to work, they just lent us money to buy them. In Mexico we were informed in writing that we were coming to tomato and vegetable greenhouses, and this was a lie because in the work contract it says "greenhouse" and here we are in a blueberry farm, in other words it was all a sham since we left Mexico.

Because of the weather since we got here we have not been able to work many hours but, as if the supervisors were making fun of us, when there is good weather and sun, they don't give us more hours to compensate for the days with no work; and sometimes they remove us from our work without apparent motive before we have completed the 8 hours of work.

In the fields we do not have proper places to eat; we eat on the ground and under the rain because they forbid us to get on the bus. Also there are not enough bathrooms in the blueberry area; there is only one bathroom which is full of excrement, in other words when we have to do our physiological

necessities (i.e.: got to the bathroom) we have to go in the open. This is an embarrassing situation and risky for us. For this reason some of the workers are sick with diarrhea, nevertheless the worst part is that they do not give us medicine and they don't take us to the doctor because the supervisors say that we do not have the right to medical service, in spite of having a social insurance card that it seems is only valid if we are in grave condition or dying. There was a worker who became gravely ill from a cold, had a temperature for various days, swollen throat, body aches, and the worst is that he almost couldn't breathe, as if he had asthma. Even so he worked as long as his strength allowed him to and all his illness could have been avoided; but because we feel intimidated by the supervisors who tell us that if we get sick and don't work, then they won't pay us and that also medical attention costs us approximately \$80 plus medicine and the taxi from the farm to the medical clinic.

That was the case of the worker Audy Vega Rovira, who when being very ill asked to be taken to the doctor, and then the doctor did not give him an adequate checkup and told him that he only had an enflamed throat; this was a lie because this worker was having a very difficult time breathing and was very agitated. This worker was told by one of the managers that all the expenses were to be deducted from his pay cheque, so the worker called the Mexican consulate to express his disagreement and to ask for their intervention. The same manager found out about this and the next day asked for the worker and interrogated him about what he had told the consulate. He was informed about the disagreement and was told that the medical service was not going to be deducted from his pay, but that he should not call the consulate again, that when he had a problem he should first speak to him.

Another subject is that the houses are very small for the number of workers in each one, in one of the houses the kitchen is very small and there are only two refrigerators for 10 people and the fan in the kitchen doesn't work, because it doesn't have the necessary tubing to remove the smoke and as a result the house fills with heavy smoke and the fire alarms go off a lot.

In the transport that takes the workers to the cranberry fields, a van often takes 10 workers crammed inside, and after we finish work and are about to go the order us to remove our rain clothes outside in the open so as not to dirty the inside of the van, and in that way exposing us to getting pneumonia because our bodies are hot and we remove our clothes under the rain and cold under the threat that if we don't do it, we will have to go to work in bicycles.

These managers from the beginning have treated us with screams, humiliations, intimidations; they also forbid us to talk, sing, or whistle and have even pushed a worker, who for fear and ignorance of his rights did not want to report the incident. What makes our situation more humiliating is that the managers who are originally from India, to their co nationals who work near

us, they allow them what they forbid us, they don't rush them and they even play and laugh with them.

For these and other motives, we beg the authorities to find a solution to these problems and that the contract to work in greenhouses is carried out and in that way we can work more hours like other workers and recover the time lost in this farm.

Signed,

THE AFFECTED WORKERS OF THE GOLDEN EAGLE GROUP FARM (GERI PARTNERSHIPS FARM ACCORDING TO THE WITTREN LABORAL CONTRACT), PITT MEADOWS, BC.