



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

**BETWEEN: MINISTRY OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR
 THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS BRANCH (THE BRANCH)**

**AND: BC AGRICULTURE COUNCIL
 AND BCAC MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum is designed to create a framework for a partnership approach to addressing awareness and education of employer and employee rights and responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act and Regulation and to build on initiatives already undertaken by many associations.

The goals of this partnership are:

- Produce a framework for a partnership between the Employment Standards Branch, Ministry of Skills Development and Labour and the Agriculture sector.
- Increase education, understanding and compliance in regard to the Employment Standards Act (ESA) with a focus on core requirements under the ESA.
- Provide a more proactive, efficient and mutually satisfactory means of dealing with employment legislation issues and complaints while protecting the most vulnerable of employees.
- To assist in creating opportunities for youth employment in Agriculture.

COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

- Improving compliance in the hand-harvesting sector with a particular focus on the field crop industry.
- The B.C. Agriculture Council and its member organizations agree that they will not support or condone the utilization of unlicensed farm labour contractors.
- An officer of the Employment Standards Branch would be assigned to liaise with the council and its member associations with initial priority on education with the hand-harvest sector. These liaisons would include visiting producer operations to further both the goals of the MOU and industry compliance with the legislation, including timely sharing of information related to non-compliance issues.

- As the largest employers of hand harvest labour in B.C., the blueberry, raspberry, strawberry, field vegetable and tree fruit associations have not and will not condone any core violations, including the non payment of wages owed to farm workers and hand harvesters by growers, farm labour contractors, processors or fresh packers.
- The council and its member organizations will support the Ministry of Skills Development and Labour, Employment Standards Branch enforcement activities as part of the council's commitment to protect vulnerable workers.
- A minimum of five jointly delivered education sessions will be held annually directed at industry participants including producers, contract labour services and employees.
- The partners will develop educational materials to be used in a number of venues - seminars, industry newsletters, targeted mail outs. Information sessions can take place in various locations, including on farm.
- The council and its member associations will promote use of the materials and attendance at seminars.
- Partner web sites to include a description of the partnership, its goals and progress towards meeting the goals.
- The council will seek to provide a resource to support the partnership through Skills Development and Labour component of the Agri-Food Futures Fund.
- The signatories will link to the Agriculture Labour Partnership Committee for input, advice and recommendations in regard to trends, potential priorities and activities of the partnership.

EVALUATION

- Success of the partnership will in part be measured by complaint and audit results in future years using 2002 data as baseline.
- MOU to be evaluated annually to ascertain results and the need for revisions to program focus and direction.

THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNED THIS _____ DAY OF _____ 2005

DIRECTOR
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS BRANCH

BC AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

ASSOCIATED GINSENG GROWERS OF B.C.

B.C. BLUEBERRY INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

B.C. CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

B.C. POULTRY ASSOCIATION

B.C. CRANBERRY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

B.C. FRUIT GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

B.C. GRAIN PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

B.C. GREENHOUSE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

B.C. LANDSCAPE & NURSERY ASSOCIATION

B.C. MILK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

B.C. PORK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

B.C. POTATO & VEGETABLE GROWERS
ASSOCIATION

B.C. RASPBERRY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

CERTIFIED ORGANIC GROWERS
ASSOCIATION OF BC

RASPBERRY INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

FRASER VALLEY BUSH BEAN GROWERS'
ASSOCIATION

FARM COMMUNITY COUNCIL

HORSE COUNCIL OF B.C.

FRASER VALLEY COLE CROP GROWERS
ASSOCIATION

FRASER VALLEY CORN GROWERS'
ASSOCIATION

FRASER VALLEY PEA GROWERS
ASSOCIATION

FRASER VALLEY STRAWBERRY GROWERS
ASSOCIATION

UNITED FLOWER GROWERS CO-OPERATIVE
ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION OF B.C. GRAPE GROWERS

OKANAGAN KOOTENAY CHERRY
GROWERS ASSOCIATION