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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **B.C. Farmers and Ranchers Talk Land Use and Labour in Victoria**

**VICTORIA – November 6, 2018:** Farm and ranch leaders from across the province have arrived in Victoria for “Ag Day”, BC Agriculture Council’s premier advocacy event.

Organized by BC Agriculture Council (BCAC), *Ag Day* is a series of scheduled meetings between B.C. farmers and ranchers, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, and senior government officials and other key stakeholders such as B.C.’s Agriculture Land Commission (ALC).

Ag Day’s main objective is to connect key sector representatives with government to increase awareness around the positive impacts agriculture has on B.C.’s economy and speak to specific challenges.

“BCAC, along with its member associations, have developed key messages to bring to Victoria today,” says Stan Vander Waal, President, BCAC. “We want to see an update to the provincial farm and ranch taxation legislation to better target incentives to support active farmers and increase farmland productivity. It is time to address this very persistent issue.”

Another key message BCAC is taking to parliament is relating to labour.

Currently, workers in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) are required to purchase third party health insurance when working in Canada. As part of the Province’s next steps toward the elimination of the Medical Services Plan (MSP), employers will now pay premiums and transition to the new [Employer Health Tax](#).

Requiring B.C. farmers to pay the payroll health tax on wages paid to SAWP workers is double billing. As many of these workers are here for less than 6 months, they are ineligible to participate in B.C.’s MSP.

“Access to labour is an ongoing challenge for employers in agriculture,” said Vander Waal. “As many of these workers are here for less than 6 months, they are ineligible to participate in MSP. Today, we will recommend that SAWP workers be excluded from the payroll health tax calculations.”

The meetings take place on Tuesday and are followed by an evening networking reception.

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