

July 14, 2025

The Honourable Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture and Food
Government of British Columbia
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Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Sent via Email: AF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Subject: BCAC on Driver's Licensing for AgStream Workers

I am writing on behalf of BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) to highlight an important opportunity to support temporary foreign workers (TFWs), who make important contributions to the agriculture sector in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada. Specifically, we are seeking your support in ensuring that driver's license requirements for SAWP workers are also applied to AgStream workers.

As a subsidiary of BCAC, the Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI), works with employers, governments, and many strategic partners to meet the growing challenge of finding farm workers and to improve working conditions.

As you know, there are four programs through which an employer can hire a TFW in Canada, though most agricultural employers in B.C. use the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) or the Agricultural Stream (AgStream). There are several differences between these programs, but it is important to note that the period of employment is limited to 8 months under SAWP, whereas AgStream workers may remain in Canada up to 24 months and employers can apply to renew for another term while the worker is still in Canada.

Some years ago, the *Motor Vehicle Act* and *Motor Vehicle Act Regulations* were amended to allow visitors under SAWP to be exempted from the requirement to hold a valid B.C. driver's license for up to 12 months, so long as such visitors possessed a valid driver's license from their home jurisdiction. However, this exemption does not currently extend to visitors under AgStream, who currently must apply for a B.C. driver's license, including the successful completion of a knowledge test and road test, or else obtain an International Driving Permit in their home jurisdiction.


This licensing requirement for visitors under AgStream presents a financial and logistical burden for both workers and employers. For workers, delays in obtaining a B.C. driver's license can lead to reduced independence and limited access to essential services, social activities, and community resources. Additionally, the requirement to surrender their valid driver's license from their home country to obtain a B.C. license may interfere with their ability to drive upon returning home, potentially impacting their livelihoods. For employers, this also poses a challenge, as many AgStream job descriptions approved under the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) include driving as an essential duty. When workers are unable to drive, it hinders their ability to fulfill their role and affects the overall efficiency of farm operations. Oftentimes, AgStream workers are also employed in rural areas where there is limited or no public transit.

We believe that modest amendments to the *Motor Vehicle Act* and *Motor Vehicle Act Regulations* can address this discrepancy and better support visitors under AgStream. As Division 30C.01 of the Regulations establishes the exemption for visitors under the SAWP, we support the inclusion of a new Division 30C.02 establishing a similar exemption for visitors under AgStream. To ensure consistency with the Act, Section 34(1.1)(d)(iii) of the *Motor Vehicle Act* would need to be amended, such that the exemption could apply to a person who “has entered into an agreement under which the person will work in B.C., as part of a program or in the circumstances specified by regulation, for a period longer than 6 months but shorter than two years” rather than the currently prescribed limit of one year. This would allow visitors under AgStream to enjoy the same exemption as those visitors under the SAWP but may require them to apply for a B.C. driver’s license if their initial term is renewed.

BCAC and its members would appreciate it if you could raise this opportunity with your colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Transit, who is the minister responsible for the Act and Regulations. If a meeting to further discuss would be helpful, please do not hesitate to contact Danielle Synotte, BCAC’s Executive Director, via email (dsynotte@bcac.ca) or via telephone (604-854-4454 ext. 204).

On behalf of our members, thank you for your kind support in this matter!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Woike', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Jennifer Woike, President
BC Agriculture Council