

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release – July 2, 2020

### **Statement from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in Canada (ACCUC)**

The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in Canada (ACCUC) is an organization of over twenty postsecondary academic institutions located across all parts of Canada. ACCUC acts as the official voice for Catholic higher learning in Canada, as it seeks to spread “the spirit of learning” throughout the country.

Allowing the ongoing and rapid spread of COVID-19 among migrant workers in Southwestern Ontario and other parts of Canada severely transgresses the tenets of Catholic Social Teachings. We are concerned with current working conditions and what appears to be a clear disregard for the “life and dignity of the human person” which has unfortunately resulted in the death of several migrant workers. In addition, we are concerned that the “dignity of work and the rights of workers” are threatened due to conditions that have resulted in the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

We first and foremost call on employers of migrant workers to encourage all their employees to be tested for COVID-19 immediately. We request that employers not penalize their employees who test positive for the virus in any way. Instead, we ask employers to demonstrate an act of Christian charity and to pay these employees their full pay and benefits along with any associated medical costs.

We also request that employers ameliorate the living conditions of migrant workers by enhancing the sterilization of housing, lavatories, kitchens, and other public areas. In addition, it is imperative that employers ensure that migrant workers have added space during and after working hours. This added space will allow migrant workers to adhere to social distancing policies as mandated within each provincial jurisdiction.

We firmly believe that it is the duty of the employer to supply employees with personal protective equipment, such as face masks and shields, disposable gloves, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and other gear as determined by provincial health experts and industry standards.

In realizing and actualizing our duty to our fellow human beings, we need to support and maintain a safe and healthy community for all, including low income and marginalized people. We believe this is in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.