



June 18, 2020

The Honourable Brian Pallister, Premier
204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
premier@leg.gov.mb.ca

The Honourable Scott Fielding, Minister of Finance
204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
minfin@leg.gov.mb.ca

Dear Premier and Minister:

Re: Manitoba Risk Recognition Program

We are writing on behalf of the 12,000 workers in Manitoba's 240 food and beverage manufacturing plants.

Our workers are heroes. Since the start of COVID-19, the front-line workers in food and beverage manufacturing plants have continued coming to work, with little public recognition, risking their own safety so that Manitobans and Canadians can continue to eat. So critical are these workers that both this and the federal government have recognized them as essential.

On June 2nd, your government announced that Manitoba will be distributing \$120 million through the Risk Recognition Program to recognize the risks taken by front-line workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. We were shocked to learn that, after contributing so much to ensuring food security in this province and across the country, Manitoba's food and beverage workers have been excluded.

Manitoba's food and beverage manufacturing sector is the largest manufacturing sector in this province, representing over 12,000 employees. The vast majority of these manufacturers are small businesses with fewer than 100 workers. While many of our industry's workers will not qualify for the Manitoba Risk Recognition Program based on their incomes, there are many for

whom this payment will be financially meaningful. Even more, all of our workers will see this as a strong acknowledgement of the sacrifices they and their families have made during this pandemic. In the face of a deadly virus, many of our workers faced difficult choices in deciding to continue coming to work. Failing to acknowledge their brave contribution now will put our food supply at risk if, in a second wave of this pandemic, workers deem the sacrifice to be too great.

We do note that your June 2nd program announcement stated that the Risk Recognition Program would be available to “front-line essential workers”. What’s more, the program’s website indicates that “food and beverage” companies are eligible employers. The program criteria, however, limit eligible workers (outside of health care) to “a Manitoba private sector front-line worker in the retail and lodging (hotel/motel) sectors and Business Improvement Zones (BIZ)”. It is worth bearing in mind that, without the sacrifice of our manufacturing workers during the COVID-19 crisis, there would be no food for our retail stores, restaurants, hotels or bars to sell.

We encourage you to re-examine the eligibility criteria for the Risk Recognition Program. Manitoba’s food system is essential for food security and for its contribution to the provincial and national economies – our workers play a vital role in ensuring that system continues.

Regards,



Dave Shambrock, Executive Director
Food & Beverage Manitoba



Kathleen Sullivan, CEO
Food and Beverage Canada

c.c. Ralph Eichler, Minister of Economic Development and Training
Blaine Pedersen, Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development