

Report to the
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
To the 88th Annual General Meeting of the
CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL
Fairmont Château Frontenac, Québec City, Québec
March 5, 2010

**To the President and Members of the
Canadian Horticultural Council**

Welcome to the annual meeting of the Human Resources Committee.

The 2009 crop year was no different than the past couple of years with growing costs continuously rising, mainly due to government policies and pressure from the wholesale and retailers to decrease our revenue.

But there are some good things that happened this year which gives us some glimmer of hope.

The last couple of years we have been negotiating a daily deduction with the Caribbean countries to cover a lot of increased cost in housing and looking after these workers on a daily basis. We are not totally happy with the \$2.00 per day deduction that we were able to achieve, but this shows recognition by the countries of the costs that we pay out of our own pockets. It was also recognition by HRSDC that this was an issue that needed to be recognized. We feel we have a very mutual understanding between the supply countries and the grower industry.

In negotiating with the Mexican government they were not willing to negotiate this daily deduction this year but promised to look into it. Their attitude was very different this year. They are concerned with a decrease in workers in 2009 over other years and want to know what they can do to correct this. We seem to have a better understanding of one another.

Over the last three years HRSDC has been working on a Labour Market Analysis & Wages Methodology Study in which the CHC committee has been very active. We have concerns that this has not been doable in the past and would not succeed now. Our feelings have come true as HRSDC will not be moving forward with phase II of the wage study which would have been a national wage survey instrument and instead, SAWP wages will be adjusted by a rate of inflation or the provincial minimum wage, whichever is higher.

Over the last couple of years we have had many complaints on how growers were being treated by Service Canada in different regional areas when they apply for low skill workers. Due to this, we contacted and asked HRSDC for a formal meeting to discuss this. They knew of some of the problems due to our discussions with them in the past. In January they gave us a proposal which we could accept and they will be putting forward to their department for approval and implementation for 2011. They proposed that commodities and crops already covered under SAWP would be for a low skill application at the same wage rate. There would be no air fare deduction, but would be a housing deduction up to \$45.00 per week. All other requirements for low skill would be the same as in the past.

We are still having some problems with Service Canada in regional areas with advertising requirements needed in their SAWP application along with other issues which we will try to address with HRSDC this year.

A couple of projects that CAHRC has been involved in that will probably benefit us are the labour market information on recruitment and retention in primary agriculture, identifying on-farm occupations and discussions of farm manager as an occupation.

In closing, I would like to thank Anne and her CHC staff as well as FARMS, FERME and WALI for their cooperation in the past year which has made many of our issues workable.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Connery".

Doug Connery
Chair, Human Resources Committee
March 5, 2010