

29 June 2020

Dear Dr Williams,

I am writing to you regarding about the decision to allow people working on farms in Ontario to continue working even after they have tested positive for COVID-19. I am concerned that this is a racist policy.

I am a family physician and the Canada Research Chair in Health Justice and Associate Professor at the University of Toronto. I work in a COVID-19 assessment centre and I care for patients who have COVID-19.

Consistent with sound public health guidance, I have never advised patients who test positive to continue working even if they are asymptomatic, especially not in the context of an outbreak or congregate living settings. So I was shocked that people working on farms will be allowed to keep working even after they test positive although this is a high risk setting. The current approach encourages abuse by employers who may profit in the short-term from having people work when they should be self-isolating.

Dr Williams, I am writing to let you know that I think this is a racist policy that encourages the mistreatment of racialized people and puts them at undue risk. **This racist policy should be reversed immediately.**

I understand that when you were asked about collecting race-based COVID-19 data you responded "...regardless of race, ethnic or other backgrounds, they're all equally important to us." Your response sounded similar to the racist "all lives matter" response to Black Lives Matter, and also seemed to ignore the fact that racialized people are disproportionately being affected by COVID-19.

Dr Williams, the decision about people working on farms has eroded my confidence in Ontario's handling of COVID-19. I hope you will pay close attention to racism when making future decision and while you consider whether to reverse the current approach to people who work on farms.

I would be pleased to speak to you about this and you can call me on 416-864-6060 ext 77578. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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