



VIA FAX: (416) 314-4030

September 20, 2010

Dr. Andrew McCallum, Chief Coroner of Ontario
Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services
26 Grenville St.
Toronto ON M7A 2G9

Dr. McCallum:

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union of Canada (UFCW Canada) and the Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA) and our 250,000 Canadian members are calling on the Office of the Chief Coroner to conduct an inquest into the recent workplace fatalities of two Jamaican citizens employed as migrant agriculture workers in Ontario.

On September 10, 2010, Ralston White and Paul Roache died after exposure to toxic fumes while working in an enclosed vat at Filsinger's Organic Foods and Orchards near Ayton Ontario. The two victims had been employed in Canada for a number of seasons under the federal government's Canadian Seasonal Agriculture Workers Program.

In the wake of these tragic and possibly preventable deaths, UFCW Canada is asking your office to conduct an inquiry for the following reasons as compliant under Section 20 of the Coroners Act:

- Firstly, to provide clear evidence as to the exact cause of death; the nature of the toxic fumes; whether this confined space accident could have been prevented.
- Secondly, to provide the public with a clear understanding about the dangerous potential of confined space accidents in agriculture. With the rapid expansion of corporate farming and temporary foreign worker programs across Ontario, are we doing enough in terms of enforcement and education?

Dr. Andrew McCallum
September 20, 2010
Page 2

- Thirdly, we expect an inquest would bring much needed awareness, and provide solid recommendations regarding confined space regulations and other serious safety issues currently excluded under the legislation as it applies to agricultural operations.

We strongly urge the Office of the Chief Coroner to call for an inquest to prevent similar fatalities like the tragic deaths on September 10. UFCW Canada and the AWA are prepared to assist in any way we can with our well established outreach network and agriculture worker support centres across Ontario.

As you are aware, with confined space accidents there are typically multiple deaths. The last inquest into this type of accident was the Drayton, Ontario inquiry held following the deaths of three young farm workers who died almost exactly ten years ago while working in an enclosed vat.

Dr. McCallum, thank you for considering this request. If you should have any questions or require more information please feel free to call me at 416-675-1104.

In solidarity,

Wayne E. Hanley
National President

WEH:SR:MF/mda

cc: The Honourable Peter Fonseca, Minister of Labour
Andrea Horwath, Leader Ontario New Democratic Party
Sid Ryan, President, Ontario Federation of Labour