

October 24, 2019

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of Food Secure Canada and its members, I congratulate you on your success in the recent federal election. Food Secure Canada (FSC) is a national alliance of organizations and individuals working for zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems. From coast to coast to coast, we work in both official languages, with our members including farmers' organizations, food banks, national/international non-profits, Indigenous leaders, institutional food providers, food businesses, community food centres, health, nutrition, youth and research organizations and many others. We have been a driving force advocating for the Government of Canada's recent release of *A Food Policy for Canada* and the creation of an associated Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council.

I am writing today to propose key food-related priorities for Ministerial mandate letters. While the commitment to create a food policy for Canada was in the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food's mandate letter in 2015, the subsequent creation and implementation of the policy cuts across several ministerial portfolios, including Health, Economic and Social Development as well as Environment and Climate Change. The priorities we are proposing emerge from years of civil society action and analysis on the ground. They build on previous FSC engagement activities such as "*Resetting the Table: A People's Food Policy for Canada*," the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to Canada, pan-Canadian engagement on the development of "*A Food Policy for Canada*" and the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council, as well as our most recent Eat Think Vote 2019 campaign - based on our successful national food policy campaign in 2015. Eat Think Vote included the extensive participation of candidates from across the political spectrum in 50 community-based events, with thousands of Canadians from across the country.

Zero Hunger and the Right to Food

Canada is a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes the Right to Food, and has committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including eradication of hunger by 2030. Yet, over 4 million Canadians are food insecure. *We propose that ministerial mandate letters adopt a human-rights approach (the right to food) that would then guide the implementation and evaluation of the full suite of policies that affect food insecurity, while aligning official government targets with the SDGs (including timelines, actions plans and benchmarks), committing to the elimination of food insecurity by 2030. Due to the critical connection between poverty and food insecurity, we propose increasing the value of existing refundable tax-credits for low-income Canadians, and making all tax credits refundable, as well as instituting basic income pilots across Canada.*

National Universal School Food Program

Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program and UNICEF pointed out the unacceptable consequences of this gap in its 2017 report. *We propose that ministerial mandate letters include a commitment to \$360 million annually towards a universal National Universal Healthy School Food Program, cost-shared and negotiated with Indigenous leaders, the provinces and territories, and designed to both set national standards and fill the gaps in terms of the programming that already exists on the ground.* If well designed, the program would have significant health, economic and social benefits.

Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems

Recent international reports including the IPCC and EAT-Lancet, as well as a new report from CGIAR, have underlined the urgent need to transform global food production. Similarly, Canada's new Food Guide reflects dietary recommendations that further underscore both the environmental and health benefits of improving Canadian diets. The current food system is based on industrial agricultural production that is a leading contributor to climate change. Furthermore, "industrial diets" are causing chronic illness including heart disease and Type 2 diabetes with widespread suffering and costs to the public purse to the tune of \$13.8 billion dollars per year. *We propose that ministerial mandate letters include support for a widespread transition to ecological agriculture; developing a federal sustainable and local procurement policy framework for publicly-funded institutions; bringing back and passing Bill S-228 restricting the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children; ensuring front-of-pack labelling regulation is enacted; changing decision-making on genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) to increase transparency, public participation, and the role of independent science; and stronger regulation of pesticides, the development of a pesticide-reduction strategy, and a ban on neonicotinoids.*

Make Food a Part of Reconciliation

Food has been used as a weapon against Indigenous peoples. In 2010, Canada endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. *We therefore propose that ministerial mandate letters include recognizing the right to food and food sovereignty for Indigenous peoples in Canada, and supporting Indigenous self-determination and self-governance, including control over land and resources; support made-in-the-North solutions, taking into account the cultural, environmental and geographical context of the North, and change Nutrition North to ensure subsidies are passed on to consumers; and include subsidies for necessary non-food items such as supplies and equipment for hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering, harvesting, gardening and farming, and increased support for programs enhancing access to country and community-grown foods.*

Public Interest Voices at the Table

Currently food-related policies and programs are largely disconnected, there are few public interest-based, non-industry driven policy processes, and the voices of those who are on the frontlines of our broken food system (including low-income, racialized and Indigenous communities), are rarely heard. *We therefore propose that ministerial mandate letters include ensuring that incoming Canadian Food Policy Council Advisory members are chosen prioritizing public interest representation, and that civil society is adequately resourced to be able to participate and consult with communities fully, to be on a level playing field with industry.*

The future is ours to build together. As noted in the EAT-Lancet report, "food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth." While the task at hand is complex, many effective policy and programming proposals have been identified. For detailed policy proposals, please consult the [Eat Think Vote 2019 campaign policy backgrounders](#).

We look forward to working together to help build a healthier, more just and sustainable Canadian food future for all.

Sincerely,



Gisèle Yasmeen, Ph.D.
Executive Director

cc Ian Shugart, Clerk of the Privy Council
Melana Roberts, Chair of the Board of Food Secure Canada