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McConnell
Foundation

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
1341 Baseline Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5
By email to: Lawrence.MacAulay@canada.ca

December 15, 2017

Dear Minister,

Re: Food Policy Governance Innovation and a National Food Policy Council

We, the undersigned, wish to underline the importance of strong governance for *A Food Policy for Canada* and add our voices to the call for a National Food Policy Council (NFPC), as per the proposal sent by many of our colleagues on October 2nd. We support the creation of this new independent multi-stakeholder body, which would convene actors from across the food system including governments, civil society groups, academic experts, and private sector stakeholders to provide consistent monitoring, well-researched advice, and broad stakeholder support for *A Food Policy for Canada*.

The National Food Policy Council would proactively engage with these diverse stakeholders to provide ongoing input into the implementation of *A Food Policy for Canada*. Equally important, it would help build collaboration, elevate and coordinate programs, and drive change among these diverse stakeholders to accelerate progress towards the food policy's objectives. The idea of a National Food Policy Council has been raised repeatedly in consultations as a critical governance innovation that could help resolve two critical problems facing our food system: (1) the lack of a specialized agency to monitor and improve coordination across departments and levels of government involved in food, and (2) a lack of inclusivity in food policy-making. These two limitations in current arrangements compromise policy coherence and effective action and contribute to the growing disconnect between Canada's farmers and food industry and the broader Canadian public. If properly established, such a council can play a key role in setting Canada in a long-term direction towards an economically robust, innovative and sustainable food system in which all Canadians can fully enjoy their right to healthy food and in which the industry flourishes.

The Mandate

The main purpose of the NFPC would be to support the ongoing development and implementation of *A Food Policy for Canada* with specific attention to creating more cohesion in policy interventions and improved dialogue among a diversity of stakeholders, through research and monitoring, benchmarking and target-setting and convening workshops, conferences and dialogues where cross-sectoral and inter-governmental collaboration could be beneficial.

Specifically, the NFPC would:

1. Align purpose, expertise and actions to implement *A Food Policy for Canada* across sectors
2. Advise government on critical food policy issues as they emerge, while ensuring departments retain independent authority over their mandates
3. Work to build consensus and engagement while fostering efficiencies among diverse stakeholder groups and government actors
4. Provide research and expertise that incorporates data and analysis from across the food system to inform government policy-making

5. Provide regular venues for dialogue and information-sharing, such as web platforms, conferences and workshops
6. Set benchmarks to independently monitor progress on achieving the goals set out in Canada's food policy
7. Provide support to resource-constrained stakeholders, enabling inclusive participation in relevant food policy discussions
8. Proactively engage stakeholders to facilitate coordination of activities and alignment and accelerate the pace of change towards the objectives of *A Food Policy for Canada*
9. Potentially, given adequate resources and coordinated support from private and philanthropic organizations, fund projects that meet food policy goals

Rationale

National food policy governance is important to various food-system actors for different reasons.

- **Industry actors** across the food-system value chain have long advocated for an interface through which they can engage whole-of-government approaches to explore, understand and address policy issues that extend beyond the domain of any single department. Furthermore, Canada's agri-food industry stakeholders continue to grapple with the growing distance between the average Canadian and the production of their food. The dialogue among stakeholders involved in national food policy governance presents a potential forum to build common understanding and proactively address public trust concerns.
- **Civil society** actors have critical on-the-ground, evidence-based expertise in health and nutrition, environment, social justice and equity issues, a range of factors that could be better integrated in policy development. Civil society organizations and institutions have had little access to decision-making processes, despite frequently confronting policy barriers that compromise their own effectiveness and regularly contributing to consultations. Their integral participation offers opportunities for the federal government to foster innovation and use its resources more effectively.
- **Academic experts** contribute clear, independent, peer-reviewed research across many disciplines to help forecast problematic policy issues, monitor impacts, evaluate programs and ensure that a wide and cross-disciplinary evidence base is consistently informing policy.
- **Funders** of all stripes are increasingly interested in working with governments, communities, businesses and organizations to make joint investments that use evidence of impact to drive investment decisions.

All of the details about structure and membership have not yet been worked out by the stakeholders who have been involved thus far. Given government support for the proposal, we are committed to further dialogue over the coming months to elaborate more detailed options and proposals.

The signatories supporting this proposal are committed to working with the government to ensure that Canada is a leader not only in terms of food production, but also in terms of food policy.

Sincerely yours,

Members of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Food Policy Governance (listed below) and co-signatories:

Action against Hunger	Arrell Food Institute at the	Canadian Federation of
Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick	University of Guelph	Agriculture
Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan	Baking Association of Canada	Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers
Alberta Federation of Agriculture	Canada Organic Trade Association	Canadian Horticultural Council
Alberta Food Matters	Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute	Canadian Meat Council
	Canadian Cancer Society	Canadian Organic Growers

Canadian Ornamental Horticulture Alliance
 Canadian Pork Council
 Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council
 Canadian Produce Marketing Association
 Canadian Seed Growers' Association
 Community Food Centres Canada
 Community Foundations of Canada
 Dietitians of Canada
 Egg Farmers of Canada
 ETC Group
 Farm to Cafeteria Canada
 Food and Beverage Manitoba

Food and Consumer Products Canada
 Food Matters Manitoba
 Food Processing Council of Quebec
 Food Secure Canada
 Food Secure Saskatchewan
 Helderleigh Foundation
 Inter Pares
 Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security
 Maple Leaf Foods
 McConnell Foundation
 Meal Exchange
 Metcalf Foundation
 Mushrooms Canada
 National Sheep Network

Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Agriculture
 Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture
 Ontario Federation of Agriculture
 PEI Federation of Agriculture
 PEI Food Security Network
 Producteurs de grains du Québec
 Sprott Foundation
 Sustain Ontario
 Tides Canada
 United Food and Commercial Workers
 USC Canada
 Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition



