

# ***Peterborough Food Action Network***

December 5, 2018

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, P.C.  
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
Sent via e-mail: [lawrence.macaulay@parl.gc.ca](mailto:lawrence.macaulay@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Minister MacAulay,

As members of the Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN), we were pleased to see “A Food Policy for Canada: What We Heard.” Above all, we wanted to thank you for the wide-ranging and active consultation on which this report was based and which allowed PFAN’s voice to be heard. Likewise, we wanted to thank you for reporting back to the people of Canada on the consultation’s findings; the entire process is indeed a reflection of the government’s commitment to social sustainability. We believe that this kind of citizen involvement and transparency is critical to ensure that the public’s interests are best served.

We also appreciate this government’s efforts to develop a comprehensive, multi-ministry policy to strengthen Canada’s food system. As a network of diverse partners, we support the holistic, systems-based approach to food that is represented through the four themes of “Food Security, Health and Food Safety, Environment, and Economic Growth.” We wonder, however, how these four themes will be balanced. For example, we wonder how a bold approach to food exports (i.e., “reaching \$75 billion in agricultural and food exports by 2025”) will help ensure health, food security, and environmental well-being. We hope for a policy that will be at least as ambitious in its social, health and environmental goals as it is in its economic growth goals.

As a collaborative that has done considerable work exploring the roots of our community’s high food insecurity levels, we concur with the report’s recognition of income security as necessary for food security. We believe that a mandated annual collection of food insecurity data by all provinces and territories will immensely help with understanding food insecurity across Canada. To address food insecurity, we also hope that the national food policy will align with your government’s new poverty reduction strategy and action plan on climate change. In fact, we recommend that the government go further in this regard by affirming its commitment to the right to food, clean water, and a guaranteed basic income for all.

We were also pleased to see the report’s focus on food as a tool toward reconciliation. We hope for a process that distributes power equitably and supports Indigenous sovereignty. We believe that it is important to avoid categorizing Indigenous peoples as one of many distinctive groups in society and instead for the Canadian government to engage with Indigenous peoples on a nation to nation basis. A rights-based approach to food could also go a long way toward addressing the struggles of Indigenous people.

We were pleased to see the awareness and support of small-scale localized food production and communities’ role in this. We hope that the government will provide communities and ecologically minded farmers with

support through, for example, reducing land use barriers, providing grants for small-scale farmers, developing partnerships with other levels of government, and encouraging more growing practices that are truly sustainable.

With regard to the environment, we saw no real discussion of the impact that agriculture and the food system has on climate change. We hope that the government will take action to encourage healthy food to be sustainably grown on farms of all sizes. In addition, we would like to see an emphasis on sustainable diets that would align with the soon-to-be-released Canada's Food Guide.

While the report makes references to producers and the food industry, we were alarmed to find no mention of migrant agricultural workers. They bear a large responsibility in food production in Canada and we would like to see their role and experience included in the health and social goals of the policy.

Our community-based collaborative supports a policy commitment to the ongoing involvement of citizens through government-supported community-based approaches to food security and an external advisory body consisting of diverse stakeholders. We are concerned, however, about the role of industry in the advisory group and wonder how their conflict of interest will be addressed so that the health and well-being of Canada's people and the environment is prioritized and protected.

Overall, we trust that the government will do its utmost to address the concerns raised in the consultation process. We understand that the consultation revealed a range of complex and sometimes conflicting recommendations that may make policy decisions difficult. In the end, we hope that the needs of those most at-risk will be prioritized and that any policy to enhance economic growth will emphasize social justice, health, and environmental well-being.

In a time where there appears to be some public distrust of social institutions, we applaud your leadership efforts to engage citizens around the complex and crucial issues around food. We look forward to seeing a comprehensive policy, sufficient funds to support it, and mechanisms to help ensure that it will endure well into the future with successive administrations. PFAN also looks forward to opportunities to remain involved in this exciting process and, with the support of government, to augment our ongoing community food work.

Sincerely,

***Original signed by***

Rosana Salvaterra, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health  
Chair, Peterborough Food Action Network

cc: Hon. Maryam Monsef, MP for Peterborough-Kawartha  
Jamie Schmale, MP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock  
Kim Rudd, MP for Northumberland—Peterborough South  
Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development  
Hon. Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Health  
Hon. Jane Philpott, Minister of Indigenous Services