

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

December 15, 2021

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are writing on behalf of Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable industry to urge your government to take swift action to address ongoing supply chain disruptions that are having a significant impact on our sector and pose a serious threat to Canada's food security and economic sustainability. In particular, the Government of Canada should name a Supply Chain Commissioner to lead a Joint Industry-Government Task Force to bring departments, stakeholders, and international partners together to effectively address these disruptions in a multi-lateral and holistic manner.

In November 2021, North America's fresh produce industry issued a [call for urgent government action to address significant ongoing supply chain disruptions](#) with impacts to our food systems, economies, and consumers around the globe. This statement outlined examples of multi-faceted, complex and interconnected challenges facing the fresh produce sector, including: crippling port congestion, delays and exploding costs in container shipping, cascading effects of inconsistent product delivery, continuing labour shortages across the supply chain, growing input shortages, and stockpiling of product by consumers. Without concerted engagement to find solutions, these challenges will have long-lasting impacts on all North American economies and the people who depend on them.

In the United States, the Biden Administration has been actively engaged in efforts to address these issues, including through the appointment of John Porcari as Port Envoy to the White House's Supply Chain Task Force. Industry was also pleased to see the recent passage of the *Ocean Shipping Reform Act* by the U.S. House of Representatives. As a smaller market reliant upon trade, it is imperative for the federal government to demonstrate similar leadership in these discussions to ensure Canada's needs and interests are represented and that there is not an economic incentive for companies to redirect their business elsewhere.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of a whole-of-government approach to be able to recognize, understand and address the multi-faceted challenges at hand. The responsibility for mitigating these supply chain disruptions cannot and should not be tasked within a single department, nor in government silos. Recognizing that the challenges we face do not fall within the purview of any individual Minister or department, a Supply Chain Commissioner will play a crucial role in bringing the necessary stakeholders to the table and providing transparency and accountability for finding solutions.

Additional key considerations for the structure of the proposed Supply Chain Commissioner and Joint Industry-Government Task Force include:

- The Supply Chain Commissioner must be mandated and empowered to bring together the necessary stakeholders to effectively address the complicated and interconnected supply chain disruptions we are facing. This person should have the reputation and authority to be able to deliver on this task.
- The Supply Chain Commissioner should be independently empowered to bring decision-makers from all applicable government departments to the table (including, but not limited to, Agriculture

and Agri-Food Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, Transport Canada, Global Affairs Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency). Given the urgency of the situation, these participants should be authorized to negotiate, find solutions and make decisions on behalf of their respective organizations.

- In addition, stakeholders from across the supply chain must be included to find workable solutions that do not result in unintended consequences or compounding of problems. These should include: port authorities, terminal operators, shipping companies, carriers and freight forwarders, railways, trucking associations, agricultural and other commodity associations (including both perishable and non-perishable products), importers and exporters, as well as associated labour unions.
- The Supply Chain Commissioner and the Joint Industry-Government Task Force should also be empowered to work with international partners, particularly our partners in *CUSMA*, to find solutions to challenges of common concern and to avoid creating unintended barriers to trade.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of our request and would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this proposal further. Our organizations stand ready to work with governments and partners throughout the supply chain to ensure a path forward that enables the continued flow of our essential goods.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Lee
Executive Director
Canadian Horticultural Council



Ron Lemaire
President
Canadian Produce Marketing Association

Cc:

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Honourable Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport
Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development
Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities
Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Labour
Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety
Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health
Honourable Mona Fortier, President of the Treasury Board