Dear (MP/Candidate name),

Being a part of the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable industry, I know our operations are at constant financial risk. One reason is that in Canada, unlike our American counterparts, we do not have a deemed trust that protects us from buyer bankruptcy or insolvency. Fruits and vegetables are not like other industries. When a buyer goes bankrupt, there is no inventory left to recover and resell as others can. And given 85% of Canadian growers are small or medium businesses, this puts our farms and the communities they support at risk.

To make matters even worse, the United States has the Perishable Agriculture Commodities Act (PACA) to protect their growers from both bankruptcy and buyers who just refuse to pay what they owe. Until October 1, 2014 Canadian growers and sellers - who export 40% of all produce grown in Canada to the US – were given special protection under PACA. But because we don’t offer comparable protection, our preferred status was revoked leaving us vulnerable both north and south of the border.

A solution is at hand, strongly supported by the Canadian industry and which would cost the government no money. Turnkey legislation has been created by an expert in bankruptcy, Dr. Cuming from the University of Saskatchewan, and it needs a champion. For fruit and vegetable sellers throughout your riding, this is our number one issue this election. I am asking you to help us with this goal.

The produce industry is unique in that it is a significant economic driver for communities that provides products that improve the health and productivity of Canadians, with an economic footprint of $11.4 billion in real GDP. Fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of chronic disease and obesity, thus placing less demand on publicly funded systems including healthcare. Yet Canadians do not consume adequate amounts as recommended by *Canada’s Food Guide*. According to Statistics Canada, only 39.5% of Canadians aged 12 and older reported eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables in 2014.

Access to affordable, nutritious food is a prerequisite for healthy families and communities. Federal policy that supports increasing fresh fruit & vegetable consumption by every Canadian aged 2 and over by 1 portion per day can help to reduce costs while improving health outcomes and our economy, lifting Canada’s GDP by $1.6 billion according to the Conference Board of Canada.

Three focus areas that are critical for success have been identified by health stakeholders: common messaging under a common approach, improving food skills and children’s programs. The produce industry is leading efforts to drive consumption with the *Half Your Plate* program, a simple message in line with *Canada’s Food Guide*. Federal leadership is needed to bring cohesion and harness the power and potential of current programs to drive change.

I am interested in meeting with you to further discuss these critical issues. Please feel free to contact me for further information or to set up a meeting.

Sincerely,