



The Honourable Mary Ng

Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development

The Honourable Omar Alghabra

Minister of Transport

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan

Minister of Labour

July 5, 2023

Dear Honourable Ministers:

I am writing to you representing the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada, expressing our deep-seated concern about the potential repercussions of labour disruptions at British Columbia's ports, especially the Port of Vancouver. This situation could gravely impact our industry and Canada's national food supply chain.

We recognise the importance of collective bargaining and effective negotiations. Nonetheless, we urge immediate and proactive measures to mitigate the potential catastrophic impact of a labour disruption on our already strained supply chains and the escalating food costs nationwide.

Canada's largest port and North America's third-largest in terms of cargo tonnage, the Port of Vancouver, is a cornerstone of global trade. Facilitating trade worth over \$305 billion with over 170 global economies, it supports 115,300 jobs and contributes \$11.9 billion to Canada's GDP. Disruptions at this critical port could precipitate severe congestion at BC's ports and intensify backlogs in other shipping modes, possibly overburdening other marine ports.

We appeal to the Government of Canada to use every resource at its disposal to avert job losses, exacerbated food insecurity, and increased food prices potentially resulting from a labour disruption.

Labour disruptions at the ports significantly hinder the import of essential inputs such as seeds, agricultural machinery, and fertilisers—key elements of our domestic production. Delays or missed shipments of these crucial resources could impede our growth, affect our competitive standing, and potentially cause far-reaching and long-term effects on our sector's viability and health. We cannot overlook the potential ramifications on our future harvests, yields, and consequently, the Canadian economy.

The fruit and vegetable sector not only nourishes Canadians by providing fresh produce, but it also contributes significantly to our national economy. For instance, in 2021, Canada exported \$4.6 billion in fresh fruits and vegetables. Our industry also directly employs around 145,000 people, further highlighting our pivotal role in both Canadian economy and food security.

Therefore, we implore the federal government to utilise all resources at its disposal to prevent additional food insecurity, job losses, and food price inflation. Swift resolution of this situation and prevention of future occurrences would not only protect the delivery of our essential and perishable goods to Canadians but also safeguard our domestic production and ensure our sector's long-term stability and growth.

We strongly urge the federal government to dedicate all available resources towards facilitating a resolution between the disputing parties to ensure the continuous flow of essential and perishable goods to Canadians. We also recommend establishing a formalised process, paralleling the arrangements for the grain sector, to guarantee the movement of fresh produce even during labour or other disruptions. This strategic measure would help protect our nation's food security and maintain the overall stability of our economy.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Lee, PhD
Executive Director

The Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) represents growers across the country involved in the production of over 120 different types of crops on over 14,000 farms, with a farm gate value of \$5.9 billion in 2021. FVGC is an Ottawa-based voluntary, not-for-profit, national association, and, since 1922, has advocated on important issues that impact Canada's fresh produce sector, promoting healthy, safe, and sustainable food, ensuring the continued success and growth of the industry.