



Candidate Name: _____

Party: _____

Riding: _____

Open Letter to Federal Candidates from Ottawa Food Policy Council - 2021

Championing Good Food in your federal election platform

Dear Candidate,

Canadians need federal MPs who will champion Good Food in their communities and in Parliament. We encourage you to incorporate a Good Food lens into your platform and to champion policy- and decision-making that prioritizes Good Food in Canada.

We have identified some concrete ways in which you can do so, with more information on each item below in the Background section.

Please respond to each question and return this form to us by Tuesday, September 7th.

To help inform voters in choosing a candidate that champions Good Food, we will be posting your responses on our ofpc-cpao.ca website on September 8th.

You are also invited to submit comments in each section - by filling in this form (up to a maximum of 500 characters per question) and/or by submitting a video.

1. Will you seek to incorporate a food systems lens into policy- and decision-making?

Yes

No

Abstain

Comments:

2. Will you work to ensure Good Food is accessible to all who live in Canada?

Yes

No

Abstain

Comments:

3. Will you work to ensure governments respect Canadians' and Indigenous food sovereignty?

Yes

No

Abstain

Comments:

4. Will you commit to policymaking that contributes to building resilient local food systems, by supporting farmers in transitioning to low-emissions agriculture; supporting medium and small scale food production operations (including Indigenous food systems); and providing support for new farmers and producers, including young and new Canadians?

Yes

No

Abstain

Comments:

5. Will you take steps to ensure that the workers--including migrant workers--who grow, process, transport, cook, serve, sell, and deliver our food all have decent pay and conditions?

Yes

No

Abstain

Comments:

6. Will you commit to policy making that facilitates a safe and traceable food system?

Yes

No

Abstain

Comments:

Background

Definition of Good Food:

Good Food is fresh, accessible, affordable, culturally relevant, minimally processed, as local as possible, ecologically grown and produced/processed/distributed in such a way as to support just and sustainable livelihoods.

1. Policy- and decision-making must be made through a food systems lens.

A food system includes all elements of (and decisions made about) food, from food production to disposal. This includes harvesting, processing, distribution, preparation, consumption, and recycling/composting. Political decision-making should be made through a food systems lens.

OFPC believes that policymaking, including a Food Policy for Canada, should employ a systems approach to address social, environmental, economic and health implications of food systems, rather than the current “siloeing” of food-related issues. OFPC points out that this will require horizontal policy-making. Canada needs government departments to work together in an interdisciplinary manner to achieve consensus on policies/strategies that they are expected to implement.

Federal departments and agencies should also be expected to work collaboratively with all actors in the value chain – provincial, municipal, industry, non-governmental organizations, urban and rural, Indigenous – to contribute to the Food Policy for all living in Canada and the general development of Canada’s agri-food policies.

2. Good Food must be accessible for all who live in Canada.

Over the past decade, headlines have sounded the alarm that an increasing number of Canadians are food insecure. According to Ottawa Public Health (OPH), an estimated 13.9% (1 in 7) of households in Ottawa experience some level of food insecurity. This phenomena has been attributed to numerous factors such as high student debt, the increasingly precarious nature of work, and a growing elderly population on fixed low incomes.

Poverty is a primary root cause of food insecurity. We need MPs who support a National Poverty Reduction Strategy that prioritizes Good Food for all through: a liveable income; good jobs; health care for all; affordable childcare; and affordable housing.

OFPC has advocated for the following measures to improve food accessibility: increase the opportunities for residents and communities to grow, produce, and harvest their own food; improve food accessibility in Northern and remote communities; ensure that nutritious food is

affordable; increase accessibility through income-based solutions; and support opportunities for public, non-market means for acquiring food.

We reiterate the call by the Coalition for Healthy School Food for a Universal Healthy School Food Program to enable all students in Canada to have access to healthy meals at school every day. This includes ensuring access to Good Food in schools on First Nations reserves, given the federal government is solely responsible for funding elementary and secondary education for First Nations students on reserve.

3. Governments must respect Canadians' food sovereignty.

All Canadians have the right to define their own food and agricultural systems. This right, known as *food sovereignty*, should be exercised in all jurisdictions, but particularly through local and municipal systems. Federal and Provincial Governments should work collaboratively to identify and reduce systemic and legal blocks affecting families and communities at the Municipal level, such as the inter-provincial differences in food inspection regulations where, for example, currently only federally inspected meat establishments can sell across Canada, while provincially inspected establishments also produce safe meat.

Canada must ensure genuine Indigenous food sovereignty, including providing better support for food-insecure communities, engaging in a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples, and advancing reconciliation. This includes committing to addressing the high level of food insecurity among First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities living in Ottawa, and the ability to access affordable, healthy, culturally relevant food. Traditional knowledge of Indigenous foods and food production should be incorporated in policy initiatives. It could also implement initiatives to support increased capacity for local food production, particularly in the North, and less reliance on imported, southern-grown and -harvested foods.

4. Policymaking should contribute to building resilient local food systems.

Food policies should promote an understanding of food systems and enable access to healthy food options and sustainable diets. It should support local and sustainable food production and facilitate links between these producers and consumers/eaters.

MPs should support comprehensive food literacy opportunities in schools, the community, and beyond. Comprehensive food literacy would include the concept of food systems as well as nutritional knowledge and food preparation skill acquisition. Canadians of all ages need to be equipped to make sustainable and nutritious food choices.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the fragility and interconnectedness of Canada's food systems, with Ottawa's food banks reporting a 500% increase in calls in the first month of the pandemic. The City of Ottawa has also seen a 44% increase in calls from the previous year,

with over 6,000 calls related to food between January 2020 and June 2021. This fragility is a result of a confluence of factors including an overreliance on high-input, high emissions farming; concentration of ownership in the food chain; a lack of decent working conditions and pay for farm and food workers, and a dependence on food import and export systems. According to [Canada's Food Price Report 2021](#), which focuses on the impacts of the pandemic, predicts a total increase in food prices of 3% to 5%.

Due to this fragility and increased uncertainty and resulting global market volatility, in order to protect against disruptions to all aspects of the agri-food supply chain, Canadians need MPs who will act to build resilient local food systems; we need food policies that ensure a socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable food system is developed and maintained in order to prevent the major shocks we've seen throughout 2020 and 2021. Good Food and local economic development need to work hand in hand to ensure that existing and new farms/farmers are ecologically and economically viable and supported. We need MPs who will ensure federal levers are used to support local economic development related to both food and farming in Ottawa, including on NCC lands, with an emphasis on new farmers and farms producing for regional markets.

5. Governments must ensure decent work and justice for all workers in the food system.

Workers in every aspect of the food system -- including farmers and farm workers, processors, delivery and retail workers, and migrant workers -- play an essential role in Canadians' access to food. The COVID-19 pandemic created greater public awareness of this fact.

But it also exposed the low pay, precarious employment, and unsafe living and working conditions that food workers face. Migrant workers are especially vulnerable. On the front lines of the pandemic, food workers have also faced many risks associated with COVID-19.

We have seen employers and governments beginning to recognize these issues during the pandemic, with the introduction of temporary initiatives like "hero pay" and a limited immigration program for essential foreign workers. But food workers deserve long-term change to guarantee their right to decent work. This is long overdue, but with greater public recognition of food workers' contributions, now is an opportunity to take action to ensure decent work and justice for all workers across the food system.

6. Policymaking should facilitate a safe and traceable food system.

Policymaking should facilitate a safe and traceable food system; that is, in which there is traceability of food (and ingredients) throughout the supply chain -- from growers and producers to suppliers, processors, brokers, retailers, and regulators -- to enable reductions in contamination response times and increase consumer confidence through labelling traits backed by systems of verification (e.g., GMO-Free, Organic or place of origin - country, region or specific farm where possible).

Consideration should be given to developing policies that enable food to be traced using new technologies where appropriate, such as blockchain, digital sensors, or cloud-based tracking systems, in order to facilitate end-to-end transparency and provide both farmers and consumers with more information about the Canadian food system. Any requirements for the implementation of new technologies must not be cost-prohibitive for farmers, and the information must be delivered in consumer-friendly formats. The benefits of which would allow anyone to more efficiently source information about the origin, condition, and movement of food through the supply chain, giving confidence to consumers in knowing where their food comes from, and enable officials to trace contaminated food in the event of a foodborne disease outbreak.