



Food and
Beverage
Canada



Aliments
et boissons
Canada



May 11, 2020

The Honourable Navdeep Bains
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

Dear Minister

We are writing on behalf of Canada's food and beverage manufacturing sector. Food and beverage processing is the largest manufacturing sector in the country. It includes over 7,000 companies employing close to 300,000 workers and producing \$118 billion in products every year.

COVID-19 has hit Canada's food and beverage manufacturing sector and our workers very hard. Food has been declared "critical infrastructure" and yet our plants have continued to operate with little recognition and even less support.

Food and beverage manufacturers have a virtually impossible task. They have been asked to keep their plants running so people like us can eat. At the same time, our members have been tasked with keeping their workers safe – safe from a deadly virus.

The cost of adapting to COVID-19 has, by our estimates, exceeded \$800 million. Most food and beverage manufacturers will not qualify for COVID-19 emergency relief because programs like the Canadian Emergency Wage Benefit (CEWB) are based on revenue losses - for many in our industry, revenues have not fallen, costs have soared. At the same time, it is proving virtually impossible for food and beverage manufacturers to pass these costs on to consumers.

This is not a "short term" crisis. This is a new normal of extraordinary cost pressures and industry restructuring facing Canada's largest manufacturing sector.

Canada's Agri-food Economic Strategy Table has called on food and beverage processing to increase both domestic production and exports. In the face of COVID-19, these goals will be even harder to achieve.

We are pleased that you have created the Industry Strategy Council to assess the scope and depth of COVID-19's impact. We urge you to include, on it, a representative of Canada's food and beverage manufacturing sector.

It is critical for the future of this industry and Canada's food security that Canada's largest manufacturing sector be directly represented in this initiative through our organizations.

Regards,

Norm Beal, CEO
Food and Beverage Ontario



Tammy Brideau, Executive Director
Food & Beverage Atlantic



Sylvie Cloutier
Présidente-directrice générale | CEO
Conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec



James Donaldson, CEO
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Dave Shambrock, Executive Director
Food and Beverage Manitoba



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