



**Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA)
Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
August 6, 2014**

The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) represents Canadian and international members who are responsible for 90% of the fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada. Our diverse membership is made up of every segment of the produce industry supply chain. From grower-shippers, to packers, distributors and foodservice operators, to the local retailers, CPMA members bring fresh fruit and vegetables from the farm gate to the dinner plate for Canadian families, right across the country.

CPMA is fortunate to represent a sector that is a significant **economic driver for communities** that also **improves the health and productivity of Canadians**. There are only a rare, few sectors that offer such important, tangible benefits to Canadians and their communities both economically and in their physical well-being.

Canada's produce industry had an estimated impact of \$11.4 billion in real GDP in 2013¹. This generates important tax collections for both federal and provincial governments, with the total increase in personal income taxes, corporate income taxes, and taxes on products adding to \$3.7 billion.

Adding to the direct economic impact, the produce sector offers significant cost savings to Canada's health care system by minimizing obesity and chronic diseases through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. In 2008, the economic cost of obesity was estimated at \$4.6 billion. One-third of all Canadians suffer from at least one chronic disease, at a cost to the Canadian economy of over \$90 billion annually in treatment and lost productivity. Children are also affected by chronic disease; currently more than one in four Canadian children and youth are overweight or obese - and the rates are increasing.

As Health Minister Rona Ambrose said to the Economic Club of Canada in January 2014, "(the) economic connection (to healthcare) is important because it speaks to the fact that all sectors, not just government and healthcare, have a stake in the health of Canadians." For none is this more true than for the produce sector.

Canada is the only G7 country without a national fruit and vegetable consumption scheme. By working together to get Canadians to eat more produce, we can create a win-win-win opportunity resulting in: increased industry growth and prosperity; decreased health care costs for the Canadian government; and healthier, more productive Canadians.

For these reasons and more, CPMA created *Half Your Plate*.

Half Your Plate

Encouraging Canadians to eat healthier by filling half of their plate with fruits and vegetables is the backbone of CPMA's *Half Your Plate* initiative. Though a simple concept, the increase in fruit and vegetable consumption will strengthen the economic impact of the produce industry in Canadian communities. This will create more jobs and increase productivity, all while keeping Canadians out of the healthcare system.

¹ Conference Board of Canada, *More Than a Healthy Habit: Assessing the Economic Contribution of Canada's Produce Industry* (May 2014).

Half Your Plate was designed in consultation with Health Canada to ensure alignment with government messaging on healthy eating, including *Canada's Food Guide*. CPMA believes in a partner-focused approach, and hopes to create an innovative partnership between the private, public and non-profit sectors to mutual advantage, building on CPMA's existing strong relationships. CPMA already works closely with groups like the Canadian Public Health Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society who assist with outreach efforts. Within the *Half Your Plate* initiative lie various opportunities for stakeholders to work together and promote the multitude of benefits of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Food Skills and Produce Literacy

While many Canadians want to eat healthier and improve their well-being, a growing lack of food skills and knowledge among the Canadian public is widely recognized as a challenge to increasing healthy choices. *Half Your Plate* includes initiatives targeted towards consumers such as branded packaging and information at retail, a website with tip sheets and recipes, social media campaigns to engage Canadians, and more. Health Canada is also undertaking efforts to improve food skills as part of their mandate and any current or future CPMA programming would align with and support Health Canada's existing programs and strategies.

Although parents are often targeted as primary purchasers, children must be a key target group of any healthy eating initiative. Children are important secondary purchasers, who greatly influence food choices in a household. Investing in children can lead to long-term change in dietary habits and food skills. For these reasons, CPMA created the *Freggie In-School Program*, designed to encourage children to eat fruits and vegetables as part of healthy lunches and snacks at school, while helping them understand the benefits of making healthy food choices that include fresh fruits and vegetables.

By focusing on children, we are also helping their parents. All parents want to ensure their children's health and well-being but many find it hard to convince their children to choose fruits and vegetables over junk food. By educating children, we can support Canadian parents and alleviate their concerns in getting their children to eat healthy.

CPMA Federal Budget 2015 Request & Offer

Through the *Half Your Plate* initiative, there is a valuable opportunity for the federal government to partner with CPMA and connect with Canadians and communities.

- Leverage CPMA's existing work to bring together government with public health and produce industry leaders to build a common path forward on fruit and vegetable consumption programs;
- Work with CPMA to grow the *Freggie In-School Program*, similar to the government's partnership with Canadian Tire on the *Active at School Campaign*;
- Work with industry to be co-leaders on the development of a national fruit and vegetable scheme, with kids as a primary target group. Any scheme would be a "Made in Canada" solution building on interest and momentum from within the Canadian public and health stakeholder communities, but could also take inspiration from other jurisdictions, such as the program of the European Union.

CPMA requests the opportunity to testify before the House of Commons Finance Committee during its pre-budget consultations in Ottawa, or if required, any other suitable location.

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