**EMAIL THIS Letter To:**

**Your MP –** [**Find your MP Here!**](http://www.ourcommons.ca/parliamentarians/en/constituencies/FindMP)

**And include the Minister of Agriculture, Lawrence MacAulay:** **lawrence.macaulay@parl.gc.ca**

**And CC Me! Ashley St Hilaire at** **ashley@cog.ca**

Dear [Insert name of your MP] [Date]

I am an [organic consumer, producer, processor, inspector, etc.] who lives in your riding.**I am writing today to ask you to support the Canadian organic industry and call on Minister of Agriculture, Lawrence MacAulay, to commit to consistent, multi-year financial support for the Canada Organic Standards.**

Organic farming contributes to the Canadian economy, offers environmental benefits, and contributes to the objectives of the Government of Canada. Specifically, organic farming mitigates climate change, reduces energy use and builds public trust (here and abroad) in Canadian food. Also, the economic potential of our Canadian organic industry is growing both domestically and internationally.

However, our Canadian organic farmers are at a competitive disadvantage in the world market as a result of having to fund the modernization of the Canadian Organic Standards.

Our largest trading partners, the United States and the European Union, regulate and fully fund their national organic programs and the modernization of their standards. In fact, the US Department of Agriculture invests $500,000 annually to maintain the US organic standard. The Canadian organic sector needs comparable support to remain competitive and maintain market development.

Our Canadian Organic Standards are the backbone of our organic industry. As a result of the Standards:

* + Organic foods produced in Canada have a successful and growing domestic and export market. Canada’s Organic Standards are among the most recognized in the world. Because of this, the Canadian government is able to establish and maintain organic equivalency arrangements with our major international trading partners and export Canadian organic products all around the world.
	+ Canadian organic farmers protect the environment by addressing the issues of soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity during the production of high-quality organic food.
	+ Organic agriculture in Canada drives clean economic growth and provides a climate change mitigation strategy. Organic agriculture contributes to a low carbon economy by enhancing soil carbon sequestration and prohibiting the use of harmful, energy-intensive nitrogen fertilizers, which are responsible for over 70% of Canada’s total nitrous oxide greenhouse gas emissions.

The Canadian Organic Standards are overseen by the Canadian General Standards Board, a standardization agency accredited by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), and the SCC mandates that our Organic Standards undergo a technical committee review every five years. The penalty for failing to do so is the withdrawal of the Canadian Organic Standards thereby making them unenforceable. The last review was published on November 25, 2015. **The next full review must be completed by November 25, 2020 – and this work takes approximately two years, so it MUST begin in 2018.** **The cost of the last review, which was completed three years ago, was $1,000,000. Though this is a small amount for government, it is a crippling cost for our burgeoning Canadian organic industry**.

Should the Standards not be modernized by November 2020, the Standards Council of Canada will deem them non-compliant and Canada will have extreme difficulties in maintaining the organic equivalency arrangements we have with our international trading partners, putting our organic export market at risk. This also threatens the credibility of the Canadian Organic Standards, puts consumer trust at risk, and is a disservice to all organic operators who have made significant investments to earn their organic certification.

Please don’t penalize our Organic Farmers, who use our own Canadian Organic Standards, by asking them to pay for the modernization of the Standards. The Canada Organic Logo and Canadian Organic Standards are owned and regulated by the Government of Canada and should instead be incentivized**.** Organic operators, most of which are farmers and small businesses, already pay organic certification fees and they should not be asked to pay additional fees to fund the maintenance of our federally owned and regulated Organic Standards. Many federal departments, including Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Transport Canada provide funding for industry standards, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada should follow suit.

**This request has been officially recommended on Dec 11, 2017 by the House of Commons’ Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food as part of the committee’s study on A Food Policy for Canada:**

**“*The Committee recommends that the Government support the Canadian organic sector by providing ongoing funding for the Canadian Organic Regime. The Committee also recommends that the Government support the growth of exports and ensure that the sector can meet the growing demand for organic products.”***

**As my MP, I ask that you not only stand by this recommendation, but that you make sure that the Government of Canada follows through on it.**

The Standards ensure Canadian organic agricultural production is sustainable. They protect consumers against misleading claims and ensure food traceability, and are the backbone of the growing domestic and export-oriented organic industry that I am involved in and support.

Without the Canadian Organic Standards, there would be no Canadian Organic brand. Funding of the Canadian Organic Standards should be the responsibility of the federal government, as it is elsewhere in the world.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and attention to this matter. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

NAME OF FARM OR BUSINESS IF APPLICABLE

ADDRESS OR MUNICIPALITY