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On behalf of

**The Food Law Action Group**

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## Submission to the Law Amendments Committee on Bill 136

We ask that subsection 4(2) be amended by adding

**(x) by 2015 the Province will develop a provincial sustainable food strategy.**

The issue of food addresses the health of the economy, the health of the environment and the health of the people in one.

Nova Scotia is a province of bountiful farms and fisheries. The most important environmental goal that the province can commit to is the protection of those essential sources of food. The health of the environment directly impacts sustainability of food production. Examples of negative environmental impacts on our ability to grow healthy food include groundwater contamination, erosion of top soil, loss of farmland, water pollution that affects fish stocks, and climate change.

Unsustainable environmental practices also threaten our ability to grow enough food. A local supply of adequately nutritious food is essential to building a resilient Nova Scotia. The Province needs to protect people's fundamental right to have the ability to grow or obtain food. Approaching environmental sustainability from this perspective will have a win-win result of protecting our natural resources and ensuring the prosperity of Nova Scotian communities.

The availability, accessibility and adequacy of food also impact the economic prosperity of the province.

Access to proper nutrition prevents children from fully engaging with their studies, and therefore negatively impacts the productivity of Nova Scotia's workforce. Many illnesses can be prevented by ensuring access to nutritious food. Estimates for the healthcare costs and losses to economic productivity as a result of obesity alone start at 5 billion dollars nation-wide.

On the other hand, the economic benefits of supporting resilient local economies based on fishing and food production are significant. In 2010, nation-wide, agriculture and the agri-food system provided one in eight jobs, employing two million people, and accounted for 8.1% of total GDP. To highlight the importance of agriculture in the province: annual farm expenditures in Nova Scotia generate more than 10,000 person years of employment and generate more than \$150 million in tax revenues.

Nova Scotia has ample opportunities to grow its economy through investments in agri-tourism, and innovative agricultural initiatives that can help build local producer capacity. This province is celebrated for its agricultural diversity and the historically significant role of its fisheries.

Food production connects environmental and economic sustainability: a healthy environment and a comprehensive food strategy will ensure a long-term prosperous economy based on products of perpetual demand.

Specific sustainability goals are essential. However, the Province also needs to consider the broader scope of food issues. A provincial food strategy is needed in order to fully address the sustainability of our food systems. This will require collaboration among multiple government departments to address the multidisciplinary nature of agricultural issues. Creating a strategy that will better reflect society's needs will ensure it is better able to succeed.

Developing a food strategy would place Nova Scotia among the leaders of the international community.

The right to food is recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 25) as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, and is enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 11).

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food visited Canada in May of 2012. One of the three recommendations he made is the development of a food strategy. He defines the right to food as follows:

*“The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear.”*

Developing a provincial sustainable food strategy will reflect the environmental and economic goals of *EGSPA*. Omitting food issues from sustainable prosperity goals would be a glaring oversight.