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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CANADA'S PORK SECTOR CALLS ON MINISTER TO DECLARE  
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS ESSENTIAL IN VANCOUVER PORT STRIKE**

*Sector calls for same treatment for all perishable products as grain receives*

**July 7, 2023 (Ottawa, Ont.)** - The Canadian Pork Council and the Canadian Meat Council are calling on the Minister of Transport to give the same protection to perishable agriculture products as grain receives in the British Columbia port strike.

"We are seeking the Minister's assistance to ensure perishable agricultural products, and farmers, do not suffer undue hardship from this labour action, and we believe a precedent already established for wheat is available to our agricultural industries," said Rene Roy, Chair of the Canadian Pork Council.

The BC port strike action by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Canada is now into its seventh day. Based on available information, the Union and the Maritime Employers Association have suspended talks and are still some distance from reaching a negotiated settlement.

"We are calling on the government, through the Minister, to declare the shipment of perishable food products as an essential service due to their role in food security globally and in Canada," said Roy. "As representatives of Canada's pork sector, we're asking the Minister to exercise his power as minister to ensure these products continue to move through all Canadian ports."

Roy said the sector has been challenged in recent months by a variety of issues, but that this issue will create millions of dollars in losses across agriculture very quickly, as processing plants will shutter in the coming days.

"Worse," said Roy, "if our products go unsold, they will create an environmental disposal challenge and lead to enormous waste and environmental damage – needlessly."

Hundreds of other businesses are in the same situation, as the port handles \$1 billion of trade each day. If the strike continues, inflation will increase and every person in Canada will be impacted, but the impact on the agricultural sector will be catastrophic.

"We do not produce hard goods that can sit on a dock for days and weeks," said Roy. "Our products need to move, and markets that are counting on our products will move on to other suppliers if they can't access our products – so the losses will become long-term."

"Minister, you have the power to resolve this for us. Please exercise it today."

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