

OPENING REMARKS BY KELLY HIGGINSON, PRESIDENT AND CEO, RESTAURANTS CANADA

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food
Food Security in the Face of Global Instability
October 8, 2026



**Restaurants
Canada**

The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

Thank you, Chair, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear today.

My name is Kelly Higginson, and I am the President and CEO of Restaurants Canada. We represent Canada's foodservice industry across more than 105,000 restaurant and foodservice locations, from independent businesses to large national operators.

Restaurants are a significant part of Canada's economy and communities. As the country's fourth-largest private-sector employer, the restaurant industry directly employs 1.2 million Canadians, with youth making up over 40% of our workforce, and generates over \$130 billion in annual sales, accounting for 4% of Canada's GDP.

But for this Committee, I want to emphasize another part of our economic footprint: our industry purchases approximately \$43 billion in food and beverages every year, including about \$30 billion from Canadian farmers, producers and processors.

Restaurants are one of the important ways Canadian agriculture reaches Canadians.

Every day, Canadians make approximately 23.7 million visits to restaurants and other foodservice establishments. And with an average transaction of about \$12 per person, restaurants aren't simply a luxury or special occasion. They are an important source of food and nourishment for millions of Canadians — including seniors and students, busy families and workers, travellers, and people for whom preparing every meal at home isn't always practical or economical.

That's why restaurants need to be part of Canada's conversation about food security.

Food security doesn't end at the farm gate. It depends on the entire chain that gets food from Canadian producers to Canadian consumers – and restaurants are an essential part of that chain.

That was the central message of our submission to the federal government's National Food Security Strategy, Feeding Canada Together, which we also provided to this Committee.

We were encouraged to see several priorities we identified reflected in the Strategy, including investments in food terminals and hubs, expanding domestic processing, reducing regulatory barriers and strengthening supply-chain resilience.

And we welcome this week's announcement of the \$1-billion Food-Link Fund to strengthen food terminals, regional food hubs and distribution infrastructure.

Current trade uncertainty has reinforced the need to build greater domestic capacity, including expanded year-round greenhouse and controlled-environment agriculture.

Investments in domestic processing, better transportation, cold-chain and distribution infrastructure, and removing unnecessary regulatory barriers, can also create more opportunities for Canadian food to reach Canadian restaurants and consumers.

Our message to the Committee is straightforward: as you consider how Canada can strengthen food security, look at the entire food chain and keep restaurants at the table.

With 105,000 locations, 1.2 million employees and billions of dollars in purchases from Canadian farmers, producers and processors, restaurants are not simply the end of the food chain.

We are an essential link between Canadian agriculture and Canadians.

Thank you.