

March 8, 2012

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health
Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9

Re: Support for the "A Multidimensional Approach to Reducing the Appeal of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages" project

Dear Minister Aglukkaq,

On January 24, 2012 the Quebec Coalition on Weight-Related Problems (Weight Coalition) released the first volume of its report Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Marketing Unveiled, entitled "The product: a varied offering to respond to a segmented market." This report was produced during the "Multidimensional Approach to Reducing the Appeal of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages" project, bringing together nine partners across the country.

We would like to emphasize the relevance of this report and applaud the funding of this project by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Our organization, the Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention (APCCP), is greatly concerned about the health impacts of increasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and the industry's youth-oriented marketing strategies.

Obesity and overweight are at historically high levels in Canada (1, 2) with over half of Canadian adults, and over a quarter of Canadian children and adolescents, classified as overweight or obese (3, 4). Being overweight or obesity is a key risk factor for chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease (5-7). Evidence shows that once obesity is established it is difficult to reverse which makes obesity in childhood an especially serious concern since extra body weight over time increases the risk for developing chronic diseases (8). In Canada, the direct and indirect economic costs of obesity total between \$4.6 and \$7.1 billion a year (9).

Although the causes of obesity and being overweight are complex, dietary intake and food choices play an important role (12). Sugar sweetened beverages provide calories but virtually no nutrients and are thought to be one of the dietary factors leading to the increase in obesity and overweight. Evidence supporting this relationship in both children and adults has been mounting over the last few years with several studies demonstrating a link between body weight, risk for chronic disease, and the intake of sugar sweetened beverages (14-19). Accordingly, initiatives to reduce the appeal of sugar-sweetened beverages should be commended.

The APCCP strongly encourage the funding of relevant projects aimed at reducing the appeal and consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages. Our experience in tobacco control meant we were not surprised to learn that the observations in this first volume have led to a strong reaction from the sugar-sweetened beverage industry. Indeed, around the world, sugar-sweetened beverage manufacturers are mobilizing to cast doubt regarding the impact of their products on health. However, in addition to WHO (10), organizations like Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity (11), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (12), Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (13), Childhood Obesity Foundation (14), Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada (15), the Canadian government (16) and others(17) recognize sugar-sweetened beverage as a contributor to today's obesity epidemic.

Given the significant health costs associated with our society's obesity epidemic and the clear scientific association between sugar-sweetened beverages and the obesity epidemic, we urge policy makers to take the necessary steps to reduce the appeal of sugar-sweetened beverages for Canadians.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kim Raine
President, Alberta Public Health Association
APCCP Member

c.c. Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer, Public Health Agency of Canada
Glenda Yeates, Deputy Minister, Health Canada
Dr. Hasan Hutchinson, Director General, Health Products and Food Branch, Health Canada
Paul Glover, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Products and Food Branch, Health Canada
Dr. Samuel Godefroy, Director General, Food Directorate, Health Canada
Members of the Federal Standing Committee on Health
Fred Horne, Minister, Alberta Health and Wellness
Marcia Nelson, Deputy Minister, Alberta Health and Wellness

-
1. Tjepkema M. Measured Obesity: Adult obesity in Canada: Measured height and weight. Analytical Studies and Reports. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; 2005.
 2. Shields M. Overweight and obesity among children and youth. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; 2006. p. 27-42.
 3. Statistics Canada. Health Profile. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; 2010.
 4. Statistics Canada. Canadian Health Measures Survey: Cycle 1 Data Tables 2007 to 2009. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry; 2010.
 5. Danei G, Vander Hoom S, Lopez AD, Murray CJ, Ezzati M. Causes of cancer in the world; comparative risk assessment of nine behavioural and environmental risk factors. Lancet. 2005;366(9499):1784-93.

6. World Cancer Research Fund, American Institute for Cancer Research. Policy and action for cancer prevention. food, nutrition, and physical activity: a global perspective. Washington 2009.
7. World Health Organization. Obesity and Overweight. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2006 [cited 2010 October 4]; N°311:[Available from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs311/en/index.html>].
8. Singh AS, Mulder C, Twisk JWR, Van Mechelen W, Chinapaw MJM. Tracking of childhood overweight into adulthood: a systematic review of the literature. *Obesity Reviews*. 2008;9(5):474-88.
9. Public Health Agency of Canada. Obesity in Canada. 2011.
10. World Health Organization (2003). Diet, Nutrition and Prevention of Chronic Diseases, WHO Technical Report Series, No. 916, Section 5.2.4 - Strength of Evidence, Table 7, 63 on http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/who_fao_expert_report.pdf
11. Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity (2011), Soft Drinks, on http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what_we_do.aspx?id=98, November 14, 2011.
12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008). State Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (NPAO) Program, Technical Assistance Manual, on http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/TA_Manual_1_31_08.pdf, July 13, 2011
13. Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (2011). The Heart and Stroke Foundation welcomes Health Canada's recognition of the link between sugar-sweetened beverages and childhood obesity, on <http://www.fmcoeur.com/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=ntJX8MMIqE&b=3562731&ct=9112811>, December 2, 2011.
14. Childhood Obesity Foundation (2011). Preventing Unhealthy Weights: A Tax on Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSBs) as Part of the Solution, on <http://www.childhoodobesityfoundation.ca/articlesAndReports>, December 2, 2011.
15. Alliance for the Prevention of Chronic Diseases in Canada (2011). Extra Sugar, Extra Calories, Extra Weight More Chronic Disease The Case for a Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax, on <http://www.cdpc.ca/media.php?mid=840>, December 2, 2011.
16. Health Canada (2010). Healthy Canadians, on http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/video/seat-siege_bottle-bouteille-fra.php, July 13, 2012.
17. Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity (2011). Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Taxes and Sugar Intake: Policy Statements, Endorsements, and Recommendations, on <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/policy/SSBTaxes/SSBTaxStatements.pdf>, November 14, 2012.