

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq
Minister's Office - Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
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August 10, 2009

Honourable Minister,

Re. alPHa Resolution A09-4, Trans Fat in the Food Supply

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), I am writing today to introduce alPHa Resolution A09-4, Trans Fat in the Food Supply, for anticipated follow-up and action by your ministry.

The evidence linking trans-fats and a range of negative health outcomes is well established, including demonstrations that they significantly increase the risk of heart disease and Type 2 Diabetes. We believe that governments and industry alike have a responsibility to act on the recommendations contained in the *Trans Fat Task Force Report* to address the significant likelihood of trans-fats' contribution to preventable deaths and disease.

In 2007, alPHa passed a related resolution (A07-2, Childhood Obesity and Trans Fats, attached). The previous Health Minister announced shortly thereafter that your government would give industry two years to reduce trans fats to the lowest levels possible as recommended by the Trans Fat Task Force. He further pledged that if significant progress has not been made over the next two years, that your government would regulate to ensure the levels are met.

According to Health Canada's 2009 survey, fully 1 in 4 food products examined still failed to meet the levels recommended by the Trans Fat Task Force. It is also known that the most significant source of trans-fats in Canadians' diets is calorie-dense, nutrient-poor processed foods that depend on long shelf life. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the motivation to voluntarily reduce or eliminate trans-fat is unlikely to be strong among their manufacturers.

alPHa is therefore urging you to follow through on that pledge and begin the process of implementing binding legislation to reduce the amount of trans fat in Canada's food supply, and continue to monitor and publish results from ongoing compliance monitoring.

We look forward to your response and action.

Yours truly,

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Linda Stewart,
Executive Director

Copy: Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada
Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Ontario Minister of Education
Hon. David Caplan, Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Margaret Best, Ontario Minister of Health Promotion
Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Ontario)
Ontario Boards of Health

alPHa RESOLUTION A09-4

TITLE: Trans Fat in the Food Supply

SPONSOR: Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

WHEREAS The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that people consume no more than 1% of total calories from trans fat or approximately 2 grams trans fat per day in 2000 calories¹;

WHEREAS The average consumption in Canada is 4.9grams per day, two-and-a-half times the WHO limit, and some boys (5%) aged 6-18 consume 11.6 grams per day²; and

WHEREAS Studies have found that for every two per cent of calories coming from trans fat, the risk of coronary artery disease increases by 23 per cent^{3,4}; and

WHEREAS the leading cause of death in Ontario is cardiovascular disease⁵; and

WHEREAS In 2006 Federal Trans Fat Task Force provided recommendations to the federal Minister of Health on how to reduce trans fat intake in Canadians' diet; and

WHEREAS On June 20, 2007, the Federal Minister of Health gave food industry two years to achieve the trans fat limits specified by the Federal Task force; and

WHEREAS In 2006 and 2007 several Ontario Boards of Health, as well as the Association of Local Public Health Agencies endorsed the recommendations of the Trans Fat Task Force (2006) and urged the Federal Government to regulate trans fat in the Canadian food supply; and

WHEREAS Health Canada's February 2009 survey of trans fat levels in the Canadian food supply⁶ shows continued high levels of trans fat in noodles, crackers, cookies, donuts, pies and other snacks and baked goods. Of the 517 grocery and fast food products examined, nearly one-quarter (117) still fail to meet the limits accepted by former Federal Minister of Health, Tony Clement; and

WHEREAS Some Canadian provinces and municipalities have recently taken steps to regulate the level of trans fat in the food supply;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) urge the Federal Minister of Health to take immediate steps to amend the Food and Drug Act or regulations to restrict the levels of synthetic trans fat permitted in foods to the limits recommended by the Federal Trans Fat Task Force (2006);

AND FURTHER that alPHa urge the Government of Ontario to take immediate steps towards regulating trans fat levels in foods and beverages available in Ontario food premises, including, but not limited to, supporting Bill 156 Healthy Decisions for Healthy Foods (See Appendix A),

AND FURTHER that alPHa urge the Government of Ontario to, in keeping with recent measures taken by the Government of British Columbia, take immediate steps towards regulating trans fat levels in foods and beverages available in Ontario foodservice operations;

AND FURTHER that alPHa urge the Government of Ontario to expand the trans fat regulations of Bill 8 Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools to include all foods available or provided (not just sold) by Ontario schools;

AND FURTHER that alPHa urge Ontario boards of health and municipalities to consider taking actions to regulate trans fat served in local food premises such as has been done in the cities of Calgary, Montreal and Toronto;

AND FURTHER that alPHa urge the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, and all local boards of health to take actions towards regulating trans fat in the food supply within their jurisdiction.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: J. Pfaff (Simcoe Muskoka)

Seconded: G. Chartrand (Porcupine)

Resolution CARRIED

References:

¹ Health Canada. TRANSforming the Food Supply. Report of the Trans Fat Task Force Submitted to the Minister of Health. June 2006.

²Health Canada. TRANSforming the Food Supply. Report of the Trans Fat Task Force Submitted to the Minister of Health. June 2006

³Mozaffarian D., Katan MB., Ascherio A., Stampfer, MJ., Willet WC. Trans Fatty Acids and Cardiovascular Disease. New Eng J Med 2006;354:1601-13.

⁴ Health Canada. TRANSforming the Food Supply. Report of the Trans Fat Task Force Submitted to the Minister of Health. June 2006.

⁵ Ontario MOHLTC. Mortality Data 2000-2004, Provincial Health Planning Database (PHPDB) Extracted July, 2007.

⁶ Health Canada. February, 2009. Accessed Online March 24, 2009 at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/gras-trans-fats/tfa-age3-eng.php#results>.

alPHa RESOLUTION A07-2

TITLE: **Childhood Obesity and Trans Fats**

SPONSOR: **Durham Regional Council**

WHEREAS from 1978 to 2004, overweight/obesity rates doubled from 13% to 26% for children aged 6 to 11 years and from 14% to 29% for adolescents aged 12 to 17 years; and

WHEREAS 55% of First Nations children and 41% of Aboriginal children and adolescents living off-reserve are either overweight or obese; and

WHEREAS there is a major gap between the reality and the perception of Canadian parents about the weight of their children; and

WHEREAS as the overweight children of today become tomorrow's obese adults, the burden on the health care and social systems is expected to increase; and

WHEREAS obesity costs Canada about \$1.6 billion annually in direct health care costs, or 2.4% of total health care spending; and

WHEREAS obesity costs Canada about \$2.7 billion in indirect costs including lost productivity, disability insurance, reduced quality of life and mental health problems due to stigmatization and poor self-esteem; and

WHEREAS the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health has studied this matter and released its report and recommendations "*Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids*" in March 2007; and

WHEREAS Health Canada's multi-stakeholder Trans Fat Task Force studied the trans fat component of Canada's obesity epidemic and released its report and recommendations in June 2006;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT alPHa urges the Government of Canada to respond to "*Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids*" and the Trans Fat Task Force reports and implement their recommendations as quickly as possible.