



May 30, 2011

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Office of the Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

On behalf of the Board of Health, Peterborough County-City Health Unit (PCCHU), I am writing to express concern about an infant formula advertisement that is in direct violation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes, (the World Health Organization (WHO) Code). Specifically, I am referring to the Nestlé Good Start Laughing Baby television commercial. Furthermore, I am requesting that the Government take action to remove this advertisement from Canadian television.

The aim of the WHO Code is to support nutrition for infants through breastfeeding, and appropriate use of breast milk substitutes (baby formula). The Code focuses attention on how the infant formula industry influences consumers to support the use of breast milk substitutes. Article 5.1 of the WHO Code specifies that advertising of infant formula to the general public should not occur; clearly, Nestlé's television advertisement is in violation. The infant formula industry violates the WHO Code on a regular basis in Canada. This advertisement is particularly offensive for two reasons: the key message is that feeding babies Nestlé Good Start formula (as opposed to breast milk) equates to a happy baby, and a happy mom; and secondly, the vast reach of this advertisement to the television audience.

The PCCHU is committed to protecting and promoting health for all members of our community; supporting breastfeeding is an important strategy in this endeavour. An overwhelming body of evidence identifies the importance of breastfeeding on an infant's physical, emotional, and developmental well-being, and its superiority over infant formula. A woman's decision about how to feed her baby should be based on factual information and take into account her personal circumstances; it should be free from commercial pressure to use infant formula. These statements are embodied in the WHO Code.

Canada, as part of a near global consensus, gave its approval of the WHO Code. In closing, I ask that this commitment be honoured, and that the Government of Canada take action to protect the health of Canadians, and remove this advertisement from Canadian television.

Yours in health,

Original signed by

Andy Sharpe
Chair, Board of Health
for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit

cc: Honourable Leona Aggluqaq, Federal Minister of Health
Dean Del Mastro, MP, Peterborough)
Barry Devolin, MP, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock
Ontario Boards of Health