

November 10, 2008

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health, Government of Canada
Hon. Tony Clement, Minister of Industry Canada
Hon. Harinder Takhar, Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, Government of Ontario

Dear Hon. Aglukkaq, Hon. Clement, and Hon. Takhar

RE: Food and Beverage Marketing to Children

The Board of Health for Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington, at its meeting of October 15, 2008, passed the following resolution:

THAT the Board of Health urge both national (Health Canada, Industry Canada) and provincial (Small Business and Consumer Services) governments to enact legislation to regulate commercial food and beverage advertising in venues targeted to children under 13 years of age; and

THAT this regulation be directed at prohibiting advertising of high-energy, low-nutrient products; and

THAT the Board also forward these recommendations for information to the Canadian Radio-Television & Telecommunications Commission, the national Minister of Health, provincial Ministers of Health and Long-term Care, Health Promotion, and Children and Youth Services, local members of provincial parliament, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and other Ontario Boards of Health.

As representatives of the Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Board of Health, we are urging all levels of Canadian government to regulate or prohibit commercial food and beverage marketing targeting children under 13 years of age.

KFL&A Public Health has recently undertaken a literature review to examine the impact of food and beverage marketing on child nutrition and the adequacy of current food and beverage marketing standards for children. The evidence revealed that Canadian children are aggressively targeted by food and beverage marketing and it is a major influence on declining child nutrition and health. The current practice of allowing marketing to children with only voluntary, self-regulation is clearly inadequate to protect the health of young children.

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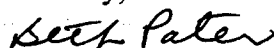
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With Canadian child overweight and obesity rates climbing, it is increasingly vital to have a media environment that promotes health. The vast majority of food and beverage marketing is dominated by high-calorie, low-nutrient food and beverages which contribute to poor nutrition, chronic diseases, and obesity in children. Research clearly shows that food industry marketing has a striking impact on food and beverage preferences by children, their purchase requests, and short-term consumption. Furthermore, an abundance of evidence clearly shows that young children, under 8 years of age, are among the most vulnerable to marketing influences because they are unable to evaluate the persuasive intentions of an advertisement; older children up to 13 years of age must be prompted to evaluate marketing.

Experts agree that Canada's current voluntary, industry self-regulated approach to food and beverage marketing to children allows for exploitation of children under 13 years of age and is in need of reform. Government-imposed regulations are necessary to address the marketing of high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages to children. Marketing should be directed at promoting healthier food and beverages and to promote a healthier lifestyle to curb high rates of childhood overweight and obesity.

In conclusion, the KFL&A Board of Health is urging the government of Canada to create and enforce regulation prohibiting high-calorie, low-nutrient food and beverages marketing to children under 13 years of age.

Yours truly,



Beth Pater, Chair
KFL&A Board of Health

cc: Board of Health members
Mr. Konrad W. von Finckenstein, Chairman, CRTC
Premier Dalton McGuinty, Government of Ontario
Hon. Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion, Government of Ontario
Hon. David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-term Care, Government of Ontario
Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services
Dr. David Williams, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health, MOHLTC
Ms. Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Hon. John Gerretsen, MPP, Kingston and the Islands
Randy Hillier, MPP, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington