

March 4, 2019

Senate of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1A0A4

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the [Ontario Dietitians in Public Health](http://www.odph.ca) (ODPH), the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system, we strongly recommend your support and the expedited passing of Bill S-228, the Child Health Protection Act.

ODPH apply evidence-informed nutrition information to enable healthy eating at every stage of life and support the creation of food policies and healthier eating environments to improve the health of Ontarians. As dietitians, we have long been advocating for legislation to regulate commercial marketing to children and endorse the Ottawa Principles of the Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition.

Restricting the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children is a key priority identified in Health Canada's Healthy Eating Strategy. The food industry spends billions of dollars per year marketing to children. Child-targeted marketing is unethical. It takes advantage of a vulnerable population that is unable to understand the intent of marketing and thus make an informed decision. Advertisements aimed at children can influence their lifelong eating attitudes and behaviours (including food preferences, food choices, and purchasing selections), and intends to build brand loyalty.<sup>1</sup> The majority of these foods and beverages are calorie-dense and low in nutrition. Frequent consumption of these foods and beverages has consistently been linked to excessive weight gain and suboptimal nutrient intake among children and youth, making it a public health concern.

Following the amendments brought forth by the House of Commons, the Senate expressed concerns that were unfounded and should not delay the vote on Bill S-228<sup>2</sup>. Specifically:

- Sports sponsorship of community sporting events - Health Canada clearly stated that these would be exempt from the proposed regulations<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Dietitians of Canada. 2010. Advertising of Food and Beverages to Children. Position of Dietitians of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Parliament of Canada. (November 22nd, 2018). Bill to Amend - Message from Commons- Motion for Concurrence in Commons Amendments - Debate Continued. *1st Session, 42nd Parliament*, 150(249). Retrieved from [https://sencanada.ca/en/content/sen/chamber/421/debates/249db\\_2018-11-22-e?language=e](https://sencanada.ca/en/content/sen/chamber/421/debates/249db_2018-11-22-e?language=e).

<sup>3</sup> Health Canada. (2018). Restricting Marketing of Unhealthy Food and Beverages to Children: An Update on Proposed Regulations. Retrieve from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/programs/consultation-restricting-unhealthy-food-and-beverage-marketing-to-children/update-proposed-regulations.html>

- Definition of “unhealthy foods” - Health Canada has not committed to replacing the word “unhealthy”, however, they confirmed that the word would not be associated to any specific food product. The decision model was revised to consider first if an item is advertised to children before establishing if its nutrient profile exceeds restrictions. Also, foods that are recommended for children to eat often will not be included in the restrictions (e.g. most breads, milk and alternatives)<sup>4</sup>.
- Front-of-package labelling - Despite also being part of Health Canada’s multi-year Healthy Eating Strategy<sup>5</sup> it is separate to Bill S-228 and should not impact the passing of this legislation.

Bill S-228 is based on scientific evidence and mirrors countless recommendations worldwide. Restricted marketing to children is a recognized best practice by the World Health Organization, as a public health approach to reduce the high prevalence of diet-related diseases, and related expenses within the healthcare system and to society at large. It is critical to protect children’s health, as part of a multi-component, upstream strategy included within the Health Eating Strategy for Canada. Children deserve to be protected from marketing of unhealthy food and beverages and their parents need support in their efforts to create healthy eating environments.

This legislation is required, as self-regulation by industry does not work. In Canada, over the last 10 years the food and beverage industry set standards to self-regulate marketing through the Canadian Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative. Self-regulation has proven itself to be unsuccessful. Research has demonstrated that exposure to food and beverage advertising has actually increased and that the healthfulness of foods advertised to children has not changed<sup>6</sup>. As long as regulation is optional, we will continue to see marketing directed to children, warranting the need for the legislation to pass.

Bill S-228 has been passed by the House of Commons and reviewed over the last two years by the Senate. We urge that the Senate approve the final passage of the Bill to positively impact the health of Canadian children and improve the food environment in Canada.

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<sup>4</sup> The Senate of Canada. (2018). Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://sencanada.ca/en/committees/AGFO/Witnesses/42-1>

<sup>5</sup> Government of Canada. (January 20th, 2019). Health Canada’s healthy eating strategy. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/vision-healthy-canada/healthy-eating.html>

<sup>6</sup> Potvin-Kent M, Martin CL, Kent EA. Changes in the volume, power, and nutritional quality of foods marketed to children on television in Canada. *Obesity*. 2014;22 (9):2053-2060.

Thank you,



Nadine Khan, Chair M2K Workgroup, ODPH



Carolyn Doris, Chair, ODPH