



The Honorable Deb Matthews
Minister of Health and Long Term Care,
Deputy Premier
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4

February 28, 2014

RE: Bill 162, Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014 - Menu Labelling Legislation

Dear Minister Matthews:

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) wishes to congratulate your Ministry's leadership on this important food policy issue and your commitment to implementing several of the recommendations from the Healthy Kids Panel's report focused on reducing childhood obesity. Menu labelling is an important part of creating healthier eating environments for Ontario's families who are increasingly relying on snacks and meals prepared outside the home by restaurants and similar foodservice establishments.

OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of over 200 Registered Dietitians (RDs) working in Ontario's public health system. OSNPPH provides leadership in public health nutrition by promoting and supporting member collaboration to improve the health of Ontario residents.

OSNPPH supports menu labelling as a population health strategy that will allow consumers to make informed choices. In our [Position Paper](#), OSNPPH makes recommendations based on emerging best practices for menu labelling. We are pleased to learn that many of these emerging best practice recommendations have been incorporated into Bill 162, Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014.

However, OSNPPH is concerned that Ontario Provincial Bill 142 does not require the listing of sodium content of standard food items at regulated food service premises in Ontario. A recent analysis¹ of fast food and sit-down restaurant menu items in Canada reveals that the sodium content in Canadian restaurant foods is alarmingly high. Children's fast food meal items contained, on average, 790 mg of sodium per serving (66% of the Adequate Intake for children of 1200 mg/day) while children's side dishes at these restaurants contained, on average, an additional 377 mg of sodium. In sit down restaurants, 33% of chicken items, as well as 18% of pizza meals and 17% of hamburgers exceeded the daily Adequate Intake for children.

¹ Scourboutakos, M. J. & L'Abbé, M. R. (2013). Sodium levels in Canadian fast-food and sit-down restaurants. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 104(1), e2-e8.



This study demonstrates why the inclusion of sodium in menu labelling legislation should not be overlooked.

Although the goal of the Healthy Kids Panel's recommendations was obesity prevention, it is important for menu labelling legislation to focus more broadly on the overall health of Ontario children. Based on the increasing array of evidence about the high sodium content of restaurant foods, the inability of consumers to estimate sodium content in restaurant foods, the negative health impacts of excessive sodium intake in the Canadian diet and strong public support for posting of sodium content in restaurants, OSNPPH recommends the inclusion of sodium in menu labelling legislation, to make sodium information more apparent and accessible to Ontarians.

We strongly encourage you to consider revising Bill 162, Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014 to require the listing on menus of sodium content information, similarly to that for calories, to make this information more apparent and accessible to Ontarians.

Clear and accessible information about the nutritional content of foods is needed to promote individual and population health, to mitigate the effects of unhealthy food environments and support prevention of dietary risk factors for obesity and chronic diseases. Well-crafted menu labelling legislation can be a meaningful contributor to these objectives.

Sincerely,

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CC:

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Kate Manson Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

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