



Restricting the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods to Children in Canada: Update from Health Canada

Michelle Hooper
Office of Nutrition Policy & Promotion
Health Canada

7th Conference on Recent Advances in the Prevention and Treatment of Childhood and Adolescent Obesity
October 25, 2018

Purpose

To provide an update on Health Canada's approach to restricting the marketing of unhealthy foods to children





Presentation Outline

- Background
- Policy update
- Monitoring considerations
- Next steps

Canada's growing burden of chronic disease is undeniable, but it is also largely preventable


2 in 5 adults live with **chronic diseases** like heart disease, cancer and diabetes





Some of these diseases are now showing up in **kids**



1 in 3 kids and **2 in 3 adults** are **overweight or obese**


72% of kids eat too much sodium


Only 1 in 10 kids eats enough veggies and fruit


1 in 3 teens eats fast food in a day


Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure are now showing up in teens

Health costs associated with chronic diseases rising

Unhealthy diet is a primary risk factor for disease burden in Canada

The Healthy Eating Strategy was launched October 2016

Vision: Make the healthier choice the easier choice for all Canadians

Collaboration with other federal initiatives such as *A Food Policy for Canada*

Better nutrition information



Revise Food Guide
Improve Food Labels
Front-of-Package Labelling

Improve food quality



Reduce Sodium in Food
Prohibit Industrial Trans Fat

Protect vulnerable populations



Restrict Marketing of Unhealthy Food & Beverages to Children

Improve food & nutrition education



Support Nutrition North Education Initiatives

Meaningful impacts on long-term health outcomes for Canadians

Mutually-reinforcing initiatives developed using strong evidence and meaningful, open and transparent consultations

Marketing to Children in Canada

- In 2016, \$1.5 billion was spent on food advertising in Canada on the internet and television (~ 20% of all ads on TV and 14% of internet advertising) ¹
- Food marketing to children is extensive; most is for “unhealthy” food.
- Canadian studies show:
 - children view ~ 3-7 food or beverage ads / hour on TV; ² majority of advertised products (65-80%) not in line with dietary guidance. ^{3, 4, 5, 6}
 - > 54 million food and beverage ads appeared on children’s preferred websites (June 2015–May 2016); ⁷ over 90% of ads were for food or beverages excessive in fat, sodium or free sugars.

Current Approaches in Canada

The Quebec Consumer Protection Act

- Introduced in 1980
- Through the *Consumer Protection Act*, Quebec imposes restrictions on the commercial advertising of all goods and services to children under the age of 13.
 - **Aim:** protect children, who are particularly vulnerable and impressionable, from effects of advertising

Canadian Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CAI)

- Introduced in 2007; industry-led and voluntary
- Member companies pledge to not advertise to children under 12 OR advertise only foods that meet CAI Uniform Nutrition Criteria

Senate Bill S-228: The Child Health Protection Act

- Senator Greene Raine introduced Bill S-228 – *the Child Health Protection Act* – in the Senate in September 2016
- Aims to protect children’s health by prohibiting the advertising of “unhealthy” food to children under 13
- Provides the Government with the authority to introduce regulations to restrict the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children
- Bill S-228 has passed Third Reading in the House of Commons in September and is back in the Senate for concurrence



Health Canada's Policy Approach: Extensive Consultations

- 2 expert policy roundtables and bilateral discussions with health organizations and industry associations
- 7 public webinars
- Hearings in the House of Commons and Senate
- Broad public consultation in summer 2017
- 1,146 written submissions
- Consultation report published in December 2017
- May 2018 detailed update on the Government's proposed restrictions



- Input from all stakeholders helped inform the Government's approach

Development of Health Canada's Proposed Policy Approach



Define foods that would be subject to advertising restrictions



Determine if an advertisement is primarily directed at children



Define exemptions such as sponsorship of children's sporting activities

INFORMED BY:

- ✓ Consultation feedback
- ✓ Expert advice
- ✓ The latest scientific evidence

Where applicable, Quebec's model helped inform Health Canada's proposal

Foods that would not be allowed to be advertised to children

PROPOSED APPROACH

Health Canada is proposing to define food that would be subject to advertising restrictions as:

- food with added sodium, added fat and/or free sugars¹ and where the total sodium, total saturated fats and/or total sugars, respectively, exceeds prescribed thresholds²;
OR
- food with a front-of-package nutrition symbol.

Foods that are encouraged by Health Canada's dietary guidance to be eaten regularly would not be impacted by advertising restrictions.

¹ Free sugars include sugars, except those naturally present in whole or cut fruits; whole or cut vegetables; dairy products; grains; legumes; or nuts and seeds.

² Proposed thresholds equivalent to the thresholds for the nutrient content claims "low in sodium", "low in saturated fatty acids", and "low in sugars".

Determining Child Directed Advertising

PROPOSED APPROACH

- The impact of marketing to children is a result of both **exposure** to unhealthy food ads and the **power** of the techniques used
- The proposed approach addresses both by considering three primary factors:
 - 1) Settings: include places, events or activities
 - 2) Medium: include Internet, TV, films, print, websites and digital applications
 - 3) Advertising techniques: include a wide range of powerful mechanisms that appeal to children

Sponsorship of Children's Sporting Activities

PROPOSED APPROACH

Health Canada proposes to exempt, subject to conditions, children's sport sponsorship

Balances the physical, mental and social benefits children get from participating in sports with the negative effects of unhealthy food advertising

Conditions:

- Techniques designed to appeal to children under 13 (e.g., mascots, product giveaways, prizes, etc.) could be prohibited



The Need for Monitoring

- Monitoring will be a critical element of successful implementation of marketing regulations
- The House of Commons Committee studying the Bill adopted an amendment to Bill S-228 to introduce a five-year mandatory review of the impact of the legislation by Parliament.
 - Focus on definition of “children”; does age limit of under 13 result in increased advertising to teenagers?
- Robust monitoring approach will be needed to inform Parliamentary review

Monitoring Strategy

- Health Canada is developing a monitoring strategy
 - will build on international practices
 - be informed by experts (researchers, other stakeholders)
 - scope includes conditions both covered and not covered in regulations (e.g., teenagers, exemptions)

INFORMED BY:

- ✓ Existing frameworks, recommendations, protocols, e.g., WHO, Nordic Framework, INFORMAS
- ✓ Evidence of marketing practices and their impact on children and youth
- ✓ Experts



Next Steps

- Refine policy approach and regulatory proposal based on further evidence development and what we have heard through consultations
- Seek feedback on detailed regulatory proposal through *Canada Gazette, Part I*
- Continue to develop monitoring strategy



Thank You!

References

1. Association of Canadian Advertisers. Comment for the Consultation Regarding Health Canada's "Marketing to Children" Proposal. 2017. <http://www.acaweb.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/08/ACAfullcommentsforHealthCanadaconsultation.pdf>
2. Prowse R. Food marketing to children in Canada: a settings-based scoping review to exposure, power and impact. Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention in Canada: Research, Policy and Practice. 2017; 37(9):274-92.
3. Kelly B, Halford J, Boyland E, Chapman K, Bautista-Castano I, Berg C, et al. Television food advertising to children: A global perspective. American Journal of Public Health 2010; 100(9): 1730-1736.
4. Potvin Kent, M., Dubois, L., & Wanless, A. (2012). A nutritional comparison of foods and beverages marketed to children in two advertising policy environments. Obesity, 20, 1829-1837.
5. Potvin Kent, M., Martin, C., & Kent, A. (2014). Changes in the volume, power and nutritional quality of foods marketed to children on television in Canada. Obesity, 22(9), 2035-2060.
6. Lebel E, Hamelin A-M, Lavallée M, Bédard A. Publicité télévisée sur les aliments visant les enfants québécois. Communication-Université Laval. 2005; 24:65-85.
7. Potvin Kent M, Pauze E. The effectiveness of self-regulation in limiting the advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages on children's preferred websites in Canada. Public Health Nutrition. 2018;21(9):1608-1617.