

Recommendations to Members of Parliament to ensure stronger regulation of marketing for soft and energy drinks

Standing Committee on Health, February 3rd, 2011, 3:30 pm

Context

- In 2009, in Canada, 24% of adults were obese and 1 in 4 children were overweight or obese¹.
- Obesity costs \$ 30 billion each year for Canadians in healthcare costs and productivity losses².
- Diet and sedentariness are directly linked to an increased prevalence of obesity and chronic illnesses associated to obesity³.

Issues

- **Role of the environment:** promotion or information campaigns have proven to be limited. It is now time to create living environments where it is easier to get moving and eat better.
- **Impact of sugar-sweetened beverages:** the World Health Organization identifies sugar-sweetened beverages as contributors to the current obesity epidemic⁴.
- **A proven link to the obesity epidemic:** each daily intake of a 12 ounce soft drink by children increases their risk of becoming obese by 60%⁵.

Recommendations for Action

- **Strict regulation of packaging and products**, notably their caffeine and calorie levels, as well as their health claims and logos to avoid misleading consumers.
- **Ban the sale of soft and energy drinks in buildings under federal jurisdiction.**
- **Regulate marketing directed at children**, as it is already done in Quebec, and clearly indicate Canada's intentions on this issue during the upcoming United Nations Summit next September in New York.
- **Implement a tax on soft and energy drinks**, of which the revenues would be reinvested in health prevention (an excise tax where each portion of one cent per litre would generate revenues of \$36 million for Canada).

¹ Statistics Canada (January 2010), *Canadian Health Measures Survey*. Consulted at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100113/dq100113a-eng.htm>

² Society of Actuaries (December 2010), *Obesity and its Relation to Mortality and Morbidity Costs*. Consulted at: <http://www.soa.org/files/pdf/research-2011-obesity-relation-mortality.pdf>

³ Schwimmer, J., Burwinkle, T., & Varni, J. (2003). « Health-related quality of life of severely obese children and adolescents », *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 289, pp. 1813-1819.

⁴ World Health Organization (2003). *Diet, Nutrition and Prevention of Chronic Diseases*, WHO Technical report series 916, section 5.2.4 Strength of evidence, Table 7, 63.

⁵ Ludwig DS., Peterson KE., & Gortmaker SL. (2001). Relation between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: a prospective, observational analysis. *Lancet*; 357, pp. 505-508.