



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-02663**

BY: **MR. ALDAG (CLOVERDALE—LANGLEY CITY)**

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 26, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **MR. JOHN OLIVER**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Labelling of food products

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

Chronic diseases are a rapidly growing issue in Canada. Two in five Canadian adults live with at least one of the ten most common chronic diseases including heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer. People with low income, seniors, and Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by these illnesses.

The economic and social consequences of chronic disease for the health and well-being of our communities are serious. In fact, 30% of health care expenditures in Canada can be attributed to chronic diseases. Poor diet is a well-established and primary risk factor for chronic diseases. In particular, diets high in sodium, saturated fat, and sugars are linked to a number of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, some forms of cancer, and musculoskeletal disease. Together, these diseases account for \$26.7 billion in direct and indirect costs to the Canadian health care system.

For these reasons, the Government of Canada is committed to supporting an environment that facilitates healthy eating. In October 2016, the former Minister of Health launched the Healthy Eating Strategy, a comprehensive approach that aims to make the healthier choice the easier choice through a series of complementary initiatives, which include updating Canada's Food Guide, improving nutrition information on food labels, restricting marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children, as well as eliminating industrial trans-fat and reducing sodium in processed foods.

Front-of-package labelling is a key initiative under Health Canada's Healthy Eating Strategy. The proposed front-of-package labelling regulations will provide Canadians with quick and easy guidance on foods that are high in sodium, sugars and saturated fats. Evidence shows that a diet high in these nutrients is a major contributing factor to the rates of chronic disease in Canada.

Excess sodium in the diet can cause high blood pressure, an important risk factor for heart disease and stroke. A recent report published by Health Canada shows that 58% of Canadians are consuming more sodium than the recommended intake limits established by the National Academy of Medicine. This number is even higher among children between the ages of 4 and 13 years (72%) and males between the ages of 14 and 30 years (more than 90%). The totality of the evidence shows that reducing dietary sodium helps reduce blood pressure in all individuals, and more so in people with hypertension.

Canada's position on saturated fats also aligns with that of other authoritative health organizations, including the World Health Organization. The totality of the scientific evidence shows that replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat has a positive impact on blood cholesterol, particularly LDL (bad) cholesterol, a well-established risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

The Government of Canada is committed to evidence-based policy making and follows a rigorous scientific process in reviewing the totality of the best available evidence related to the Healthy Eating Strategy. This includes high-quality peer-reviewed systematic assessments and reports from government agencies and leading scientific institutions. Health Canada's Evidence Review can be found at this link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/food-nutrition/evidence-review-dietary-guidance-summary-results-implications-canada-food-guide.html>.