



RESPONSE TO PETITION

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

PETITION No.: **421-01229**

BY: **MR. GODIN (PORTNEUF—JACQUES-CARTIER)**

DATE: **MARCH 24, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **MR. JOËL LIGHTBOUND**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

ADVERTISING

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada respects freedom of choice, but also acknowledges the negative impact of marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages on children's overall health.

Obesity rates among Canadian children have tripled since 1980. Today, children are at an increased risk for high blood pressure, which can lead to premature heart disease and stroke. Research shows that children's over-consumption of foods high in sugar, fat and salt is a key factor in the rising rates of these conditions.

Modern marketing plays a key role in contributing to these poor health outcomes. Today, about ninety percent of foods advertised to children today are high in salt, sugar or fat, and low in fibre. These marketing strategies use sophisticated techniques to directly appeal to children; and evidence shows that they do not have the cognitive ability to comprehend the persuasive intent of advertisements.

It has become increasingly hard for parents to compete with these marketing messages or to completely control their children's exposure to marketing. Because of their pervasiveness, most parents may not even be aware of the extent to which their children are exposed to these advertisements, or the associated impacts on them. The Government of Canada believes parents and caregivers deserve a supportive environment where their children are not constantly targeted by unhealthy food marketing.

Given the power of marketing and the vulnerable nature of this population, there have been multiple calls to restrict marketing to children. Respected health organizations, industry associations, and stakeholder groups have called for changes to the marketing environment, including the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, the World Cancer Research Fund, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, and the Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition. As well, in its report, *Obesity in Canada*, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology recommended that the Government of Canada implement a prohibition on the advertising of foods and beverages to children.

In 2015, the Minister of Health committed to introducing new restrictions on the commercial marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children. Determining the best way to move forward with restricting marketing of unhealthy food to children is being informed by broad consultations and evidence-based policy.