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## **Standing Committee on Health**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, February 19, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Rob Merrifield**

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•(1005)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC)):** I'd like to call the meeting to order. This is a special meeting, with a videoconference from the United Kingdom.

We want to especially welcome our guests to the committee from the United Kingdom. They are from the Food Standards Agency of the United Kingdom. We have Madam Deirdre Hutton, who is chair of the United Kingdom Headquarters; Gill Fine is director of consumer choice and dietary health; and Rosemary Hignett is head of the nutrition division.

Thank you very much for being with us today. Just for the committee's sake, these are the people who have actually set up the traffic light standards in the United Kingdom. We're very interested in that. We're doing a study on childhood obesity, and we are certainly interested in what your experience has been in the United Kingdom. We thank you very much for taking the time to be with us and sharing with our committee as we get into the last stages of issuing a report for the people of Canada on this issue.

I invite you to make your presentation. Then we'll open it up to questioning from the committee members.

The floor is yours, Madam Hutton. We're very interested in what you have to relay to our committee.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton (Chair, UK Headquarters, Food Standards Agency UK):** Thank you.

Could I perhaps start by asking how long the session will be? It would be helpful to us in framing the presentation.

**The Chair:** We have an hour and a half. We can take the full hour and a half, or any part up to the hour and a half. Just for the committee's information, we have another presenter at 11:30 by videoconference as well.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Thank you very much.

It's a great pleasure to do this. I enjoyed a very good visit to Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency towards the end of last year. I don't know if Steven Fletcher is there on your committee, but I hope you'll say hi to him for me if he is.

**The Chair:** He's actually sitting to my right and will be asking questions a little later.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Good. I'm sure he will.

We were very aware at that visit of the interest of the Canadians in our nutritional labelling system. I'm delighted you're pursuing that.

I thought it might be helpful if I gave you a little bit of background about the Food Standards Agency itself. Then my colleagues Gill and Rosemary will talk about the details of the food labelling system.

Is that okay with you?

•(1010)

**The Chair:** That sounds fine. Please continue.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Thank you.

The Food Standards Agency was set up in 2000 by an act of Parliament following a number of food crises in the U.K., notably BSE and foot-and-mouth disease. The consequence of those food crises was largely that the public lost any confidence in the way in which their food was being regulated. On the whole, they believed it was regulated for the interests of business rather than the interests of the public.

So we were set up very much as a fresh start following those problems, with a very clear piece of legislation that has one objective, which is to protect public health and the other interests of consumers in relation to food. Our remit covers food safety, nutrition, and the choice of food.

When the agency was set up, it was very determined to operate completely differently from the way in which any other regulator had operated, in order to be very clear to the public that we were genuinely putting them first. From the beginning, the agency has operated in a completely open and transparent way. So, for example, all our board meetings are held in public, both with members of the public attending and the meetings being web-streamed. The commitment of the agency is that every single policy decision will be discussed in public so that people can see the way in which we're making the decision and what we're taking into account.

That openness and transparency are also very useful in underpinning our independence, which is the second key attribute of the agency. We are independent from government, and we illustrate that independence through the open and transparent way in which we work.

Also the structure of the agency underpins that independence. Instead of having a minister running the agency, we have a chair and a board, all of whom are appointed after public advertisement, interviews—that whole normal process of application.

Under the act, we have the freedom to publish the advice and the information we give ministers. The whole premise is that we are an independent agency that acts transparently.

We're staffed by civil servants. We have offices in London and in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. We have about 700 on staff. We also have an executive agency that looks after meat issues, which has 1,700 on staff.

Perhaps the most significant thing I should say about us is that what we do is absolutely based on science. It is the fundamental building block of the way in which we work. In order to help us with that, we have nine independent scientific advisory committees, with about 150 scientists who advise the agency on the science in any particular area.

Our budget translates into about \$260 million Canadian. We are responsible for the assessment, communication, and management of risk, and for the development of policy for the U.K. government as a whole. We give advice to the government and the public, and through the structure of local authorities in the U.K., we also regulate and enforce. We set the framework, and the enforcement is done for us by the local authorities.

We're very big spenders on scientific research, which is commissioned through open competition. We have projects lasting anywhere from quick projects up to three years. We spend about \$60 million Canadian on research every year, and we're the biggest commissioners of nutritional research in the U.K.

If you were to ask if it worked, I would say one measure of that might be the trust the public has in us. We measure this with an annual consumer attitudes to food survey. Currently about 80% of consumers are aware of the agency, and 66% say they're confident in the role of the Food Standards Agency in protecting health. That's been a steadily upward line from the time we were founded. That, I think, is a tremendously important marker for the way in which we operate. It does look as though that independence and transparency and openness are generally underpinning public trust.

• (1015)

I think I'm going to hand over to Gill at this point. I could tell you about food safety, but I know you're not interested in that, and what you really want to get on to is diet and health. If there's anything about the foundation of the agency that you want to ask now, please do so.

**The Chair:** I think we'll just proceed with the other two and have their testimony before the committee, and then we will open it up to questioning, and we'll question all of you together.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Good.

Gill.

**Ms. Gill Fine (Director, Consumer Choice and Dietary Health, Food Standards Agency UK):** Thank you.

As Deirdre said, one of our roles is to help improve diet and health in the U.K. Our aim is therefore to make it easier for consumers to choose a healthier diet to help to reduce diet-related disease, including obesity.

I want to highlight that we are really working in three key areas: first, to raise awareness in people, consumers. For example, we have worked on improving labelling and on increasing awareness of a particular issue, such as too much salt being bad for your heart. We also work very closely in terms of products, by influencing others to

change their products, or by encouraging reformulation to benefit consumers through, for instance, salt or saturated fat reduction. Finally, we do a lot of work to influence the environment in which people are living and working. That involves working within schools, working with the legislation area, and helping to remove barriers to healthier choices.

I really want to flag up that we put great emphasis on working in partnership to get buy-in on what we want to achieve, but also to help those dreams and actions actually become reality. The front-of-pack labelling approach is one part of that particular jigsaw. That's the area we will be talking about later, which Rosemary can cover off now.

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett (Head, Nutrition Division, Food Standards Agency UK):** We started work on front-of-pack nutrition labelling following the report of a select committee of the House of Commons here that looked at obesity. It reported in May 2004, recommending that there should be simplified information on the front of the pack, having heard lots of evidence that people found the current arrangements at that time, the back-of-pack information, too complicated and unhelpful.

In July 2004 we met with stakeholders to really scope what the options were. We identified about half a dozen different types of approaches that different stakeholders thought might be appropriate. We then embarked on a program of consumer research, again alongside stakeholders, to look at the merits of those different approaches. We carried out some qualitative work looking at preferences that consumers had for these different formats. When we had completed that work, we met with stakeholders again, to share with them the results of that work, to look at what were the most favoured formats, and to discuss how we might look at the performance of those formats, because, clearly, although it's important that a format is liked by consumers, it's arguably even more important that consumers can use that format effectively.

Following quite extensive discussions with stakeholders and some further research on different formats, to make sure we had optimized the formats, we consulted with stakeholders on the methodology for that definitive piece of performance and preference research and then carried out that research during 2005. It was a large piece of work. We spoke to more than 2,500 consumers to make sure we had a quantitative study that allowed us to look at the impact on different population groups. We carried out that work, as I said, during 2005, and then subsequently, toward the end of 2005, we consulted on proposals built on the evidence that came out of the research.

Then in March 2006 the agency's board looked at all that consumer research evidence and all the responses to that public consultation and made the recommendation that we are now taking forward. The recommendation was one that was based on four core principles. What the board recommended was that businesses should voluntarily place on the front of the pack nutrition information following these four core principles, which I'll just go through.

The first was that there should be information on four key nutrients: fat, saturated fat, sugars, and salt. The second was that the front-of-pack information should include the amount of each of those nutrients per portion of the product. The third principle was that for each of those nutrients, a red, amber, or green colour code would be used to indicate whether that level was high, medium, or low. The fourth principle was that criteria agreed to by the Food Standards Agency should be used to determine which colour was used.

The agency recommended that information should be provided on the front of the pack for seven categories of food. Again, this followed consumer research showing that there were specific food categories where consumers felt this information would be most helpful, which are, essentially, rather complex processed foods such as ready meals, sandwiches, pizzas, and so on.

Following that recommendation, which was in March 2006, we are very pleased that more than 30% of the retail market in the U.K. has now adopted front-of-pack labelling following those four core principles, and we also have an increasing number of food manufacturers now adopting that approach.

At this point it probably makes sense for us to stop and take any questions you might have.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for starting us off on this, with what you have done there and explaining it. I'm sure we're going to have some questions from the committee.

We'll start with Ms. Brown. She has 10 minutes, and she can start asking whatever questions she sees fit.

Ms. Brown, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.):** I don't really have many questions, Mr. Chairman, because the presentation was so clear and laid out the facts one by one, exactly the kind of information we wanted to have. So I will pass to anyone on my team who wishes to ask a question, if they have one.

**The Chair:** Sure.

Does anyone have a question?

Ms. Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** I would love to know how you think it's working or how you evaluate whether it's working, because sometimes we do things that make us feel better, but we're not actually sure whether they're working. I'm a physician, and we used to prescribe lots of things that made us feel better.

So I guess I'm just wondering how you evaluate whether this actually is changing people's shopping behaviour, but also, how do you deal with the politics of the industry and the fights about things that get red lights?

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** That's really a very good question.

The first thing to say is that this system is only just being rolled out. One supermarket in particular has quite a lot of its products marked with traffic light labels, but other supermarkets and indeed manufacturers are just rolling the process out. So at the moment it's

too early to have any really robust information about the consequences.

There is anecdotal information about people changing purchasing behaviour and some change in the sales of high-fat products, for example, which have dropped, whereas healthier products seem to have gone up. But the more important thing, I think, is that you will know—I'm sure you will have heard—that Tesco and the majority of the manufacturers have introduced a different system of front-of-pack labelling, which is not the same as the one the agency wants. Rather than the two sides, as it were, fighting each other, what we have agreed to do is to set up the research that will look, in 18 months' time, on a rolling process, at what form of labelling has changed consumers' behaviour the most, and that's been put out to an independent group headed by the government's chief social scientist.

The purpose of that is precisely as you suggest, to get the real evidence as to what works or what works less well. I think that's going to be quite exciting, because actually, in one sense we've just engaged 55 million U.K. consumers in a huge piece of research around consumer behaviour.

Do you want to add, Gill?

• (1025)

**Ms. Gill Fine:** Yes, I would add that another part of the evidence base is that we have had information from many of the retailers and manufacturers that are adopting either approach, actually, that it is encouraging their reformulation. So they're actually taking proactive approaches to ensure that when their products go onto the market in the first place, they have a better nutritional profile, and for those that are already on the market, they're looking to see what they can do to improve them by getting a shift in the colour coding or in the percentage.

So we have some insight that there is a move within parts of the industry to produce a wider range of products, but in terms of knowing whether consumers will actually buy them, that depends on the purchasing till receipts, as well as the work that Deirdre has just mentioned.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Are you familiar with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, which has developed a program called Health Check? Again, it's a voluntary thing. I think some of the grocers, like Sobeys in this country, and some of the producers like the Campbell Soup Company have reformulated their products in order to get a Health Check mark.

Do you see that a partnership with a health charity that has a good reputation—from recipe books to their motivation—would be helpful, or do you think redoing it from a government agency would be preferable?

**Ms. Gill Fine:** That's a very interesting approach.

As I mentioned, we put a lot of store on working in partnerships. Rosemary has identified some of the retailers and manufacturers that are actually adopting the core approach that we've spoken about, but we also have a wide range of other groups, including health organizations, British medical associations, some of the royal colleges, that are actually putting their weight behind the approach of the four core principles. We recognize the influence they have in helping to change the discussion and the debate around the importance of front-of-pack labelling, so we think it is a very important way to be working, not just with a single organization, but to get, if you like, a coalition of activity across a very wide range of different groups.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Are the four principles in a food guide kind of pamphlet? Are the rules readily available for citizens so that people know why something got picked or not picked in terms of its red light, green light label?

Here, the Health Check program is very much based on our food guide. So people can use the food guide as background and then figure out why—whether it's because of sodium or fat—it was approved or not. What would be the background documentation you would have for your traffic light four principles?

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** The background for consumers for the use of the traffic light labelling is what we call our “eat well” advice. We have eight pieces of “eat well” advice, which includes—

• (1030)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I didn't hear that word.

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** It was “eat well”. We have a whole website called our “eat well” website, which covers a wealth of advice to consumers. It boils down to eight particular pieces of advice, which include cutting down on high-salt foods, cutting down on high-saturated-fat foods, cutting down on high-sugar foods, and looking in those areas—for instance, looking in dairy foods—for low-fat options. The way the traffic light labelling works is that it identifies those high-fat, -salt, -sugar foods and those low-fat, -salt, -sugar foods to be used alongside that “eat well” advice.

The four core principles are aimed at the manufacturers in terms of the information they provide on the front of the pack. So the four core principles are not aimed at consumers.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I just wanted to know if you had separate rules for baby foods. Is that more of a regulation piece in terms of sugar in baby foods or those kinds of things? Or is this straight across, baby to grown-up, cradle to grave?

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** There's separate legislation for baby foods, which defines the levels of salt, sugar, and other nutrients allowed in those foods. That's mandatory legislation. What we're talking about here is the voluntary provision of information on what I guess you'd call family foods.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Could I just make one point? I think what we're trying to do with this traffic light system is catch the consumer at the point at which they're making a purchase from the shelves. Research shows that you spend about 10 seconds buying a product, and that includes getting to the right point on the shelf. So we're trying to make something that is absolutely simple, clear, and very quickly accessible. But we also see it as a partner to the more

detailed nutritional information, which you can find on the back of the pack.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** But the baby foods aren't on the shelves, meaning that, with your regulation, as such, baby foods don't even get to the shelves for people to choose. Is that what you're saying about the regulations?

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Yes, that's right. The legislation on baby foods is quite prescriptive about the levels of nutrients that are allowed in those particular specialist foods. That is statutory legislation. So all the foods on the shelves must meet those restrictions.

**Ms. Gill Fine:** And that's agreed to on an EU-wide basis. That's an EU-wide activity. What we're talking about here is a voluntary approach within the U.K.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Fletcher.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Is it not the Bloc?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry about that.

We'll go to Mr. Luc Malo.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you as well, ladies and gentlemen, for joining us today.

Earlier, you spoke of the reaction of people in the industry to this new approach to product labelling. I'm curious as to whether consumer groups criticized, spoke out or provided their input on this new measure. If so, what was their reaction?

[English]

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** First of all, I would say that consumer groups—and I would extend this to health charities and community groups—have been extremely positive about and supportive of traffic light labelling. They like it and say it's very clear and very simple.

There was initially some discussion about whether we should have one traffic light, so you would have just have one red or one amber or one green denoting the general healthiness of the product, but we quickly came to realize that was too simple and that dividing it up into the key nutrients was a better way of doing it.

So the customer side, if you can put it like that, has been tremendously supportive of what we're doing, and it is also true to say that a great deal of industry have been very supportive as well. With the major exception of Tesco, the other major supermarkets have all adopted traffic light labelling and are rolling it out across very large numbers of products.

Do you have anything to add?

**Ms. Gill Fine:** It's just to say that the criteria by which the traffic light colours are defined have been published and are available, should any of the committee members want to see the actual amounts that trigger whether something is high, medium, or low.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Certainly. Thank you.

I'd like to come back to something that was said. Could the reason also be that it would be harder to achieve a consensus on the colour of the light if there was only one traffic light colour for all of the criteria?

[English]

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** We've developed criteria for each of those four key nutrients: fats, saturated fat, salt, and sugar. Actually that's probably an easier exercise than trying to combine the information on those different nutrients into a single set of criteria.

Again, working alongside stakeholders, taking scientific advice and consulting with all our stakeholders, we developed criteria for low, medium, and high for each of those four key nutrients. For the low criteria, it was a very simple task, as we simply had to follow EU legislation, because there is now EU legislation determining what the criteria are for low fat, saturated fat, salt, and sugar.

• (1035)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Further to the public awareness campaign that you carried out earlier this year, have you noted any increased awareness of the new labelling standards?

[English]

**Ms. Gill Fine:** The actual campaign started a few weeks ago. We are in the process of tracking the results of it and will have information toward the end of March on how that awareness is going. It's a phased approach, starting with television advertisements, and we now have advertising on bus shelters and on buses and there's information on the website. Also, several of the retailers who have adopted the colour-coded approach are also putting in their own information in-store to raise awareness among consumers.

So it's a little bit early to say at the moment what the impact of the campaign has been, but we will be evaluating it and we'll have that information fairly shortly.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** When will you have these results?

[English]

**Ms. Gill Fine:** We're expecting to have the results of the first wave of awareness by the end of March.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** But the major research I referred to, looking at what form of labelling most influences changes in consumer behaviour, will actually take about 18 months, so we should get the results of that about the middle to the end of 2008.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** How much money did you spend on promoting the new labelling?

[English]

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Could we provide that information separately?

I would think it is in the order of £1.5 million. We would prefer to confirm that figure afterwards to make sure we're absolutely accurate, but it is of that order.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Who paid for this?

[English]

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** It's part of the Food Standards Agency budget, so we pay for it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Fletcher, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Deirdre, it's nice to see you again. I think I can say on behalf of all of us that we're really appreciative of the significant amount of time you're spending to help us with our nutritional challenges here in Canada.

Since we last met I have raised the issue of traffic light labelling with industry. I think it's fair to say there has been a high level of concern about it. In one case the push-back was that it was not working in the U.K. I wonder if you have a response to the individual who said that.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Without knowing on what basis they made that remark, it's quite difficult to answer. Truly, it is too early to say it isn't working in the U.K., and it's equally too early to say it is. But some of the anecdotal information we have is showing changes in consumer purchasing behaviour in a healthier direction. Equally important is the point Gill made at the beginning that in everything we're doing in this area we're trying to institute systems that include incentives for industry to reformulate in a healthier direction, and there is some evidence of that happening.

If, for example, you're producing a ready meal that would have four red lights on it, there is quite a strong incentive on you as a retailer to try to change that to four amber lights, or maybe even two green lights and two amber ones. We have some evidence of that happening, and that is as important a part of what we're doing as trying to change consumer behaviour.

• (1040)

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** I think what you're suggesting is correct.

There's another push-back, in that some members of the industry have said it's just too simplistic; that the labels in Canada provide far more information than the traffic light system. We recognize that not a lot of people read the labels, and if they do, they may not understand them. But have you heard that in the U.K., and what is your response to a statement of that nature?

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** We certainly have heard that, and I'll hand it over to one of my colleagues.

**Ms. Gill Fine:** In the U.K. we also have a lot of detailed nutrition information on the back of the label, and the front-of-pack label is to work as a complement to that. Then somebody in a busy supermarket can see at a glance the key nutrients that are of most concern in the U.K., in terms of over-consumption.

In the work we did over a year ago with 2,500 consumers, we checked how they felt about seeing traffic light colours. Overwhelmingly, it was the colour coding that actually helped them interpret, over the information that was provided for them.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** I'm not at all surprised you've had the push-back from industry. If you go back two or three years in the U.K., not a single company wanted to put front-of-pack nutritional labelling on their products. There has been an absolute sea change in the response of both manufacturing and the retailing industry in the U.K. They've come to see themselves really as part of the solution for the nutritional problems we have. So now virtually every company is using front-of-pack labelling in a way that would have been unthinkable two years ago.

We may not always like the system they're using, but virtually every company has recognized that it's important to provide simple, clear, front-of-pack labelling.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** The system in the U.K. is voluntary. Do you see it becoming mandatory any time soon?

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Labelling is an EU competence, so it can only be made mandatory by the European Union. That would involve getting 26 countries to agree, so we don't see it in the near future. We would like to see it over the longer term have broad agreement across Europe, but it certainly won't happen quickly.

**Ms. Gill Fine:** Yes, it is definitely the view. Also, I would say that if we can get the level of interest and engagement within a year, which has so far happened from different parts of industry, to adopt approaches to approve front-of-pack labelling and it's working voluntarily, then it does question whether we need to go straight to mandatories. We have to really check it, see it, and then, as Deirdre mentioned earlier, evaluate the impact of that before moving to a mandatory approach.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** In Canada we will have trouble getting one country to agree, so we can appreciate your challenge.

I am short of time here, but you mentioned this is just one part of a much larger approach that the U.K. is utilizing to fight obesity. Since this committee is looking at child obesity, I wonder if you could share with us some other areas where you feel Canada could learn from the U.K. and which should be included in our report.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** I'm always very nervous about thinking we can teach other countries anything, Steven, and I wouldn't presume to do that, but I'm sure we're happy to tell you what we've doing.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** You guys taught us a lot about how to run a good parliamentary system, so we're grateful for that.

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Another important element of the work we're doing is looking at the nutrient profiling of foods that are being sold. We're currently talking with industry stakeholders particularly about the opportunities for reducing saturated fat levels in foods and also looking at the energy density of foods, which includes both looking at reformulation and looking at reductions in portion size.

We're hoping to go to consultation of a draft strategy in those two areas in the next month or so. We'll be, obviously, very happy to share that document with you when it's ready.

It's very important that we say the lead on obesity is not with the Food Standards Agency in the U.K. It's with health departments, because of the physical activity element, which of course is something we don't have within our remit.

• (1045)

**Ms. Gill Fine:** If I could just add to that, some of the other areas we're working on are around the promotion of foods to children and also the provision of foods or advice about foods in schools. So that's changing the environmental aspects in terms of children, being vulnerable groups, receiving messages about healthy eating or not. The promotion of foods to children is an area we are taking very seriously, and we are working with other government departments on that.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

If the committee would allow me, I'd like to proceed with a couple of quick questions from the chair. I don't like to do this, but if I don't see any resistance, one of the questions I have is this.

You have chosen four different criteria, those being fats, saturated fats, sugars, and salt. Our testimony up until now in our committee suggests, particularly with obesity, that the problem really is calories, and I'm wondering why you wouldn't choose calories as one of the criteria on your packaging that you would traffic-light.

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** In practice, we found in the research we did with consumers that consumers told us they understood already the numerical information they were receiving on calories. It was the numerical information on fats and sugars that they found more difficult to interpret, but they knew if something was high in fat or high in sugar it would be bound to have lots of calories in it.

Our consumer research didn't suggest that a traffic light colour code would be necessarily helpful in the area of calories, but it has to be said that when we recommended those four core principles, we also said that businesses might want to provide additional information on, for instance, calories. We have found in practice that most of the businesses that have adopted the four core principles have decided in addition to provide information on calories. In practice, that is happening.

**The Chair:** That would explain a little bit. It wasn't mentioned. It struck me as odd that calories would be left out of the discussion.

The other one we are concerned with in Canada, as I'm sure you are there as well, is trans fats. I am wondering what you're doing with trans fats with regard to labelling and what approach the United Kingdom has with trans fats as a whole.

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Our intakes of trans fats are quite a bit lower than they are in North America, but it is still an issue of concern to consumers. Currently trans fats aren't labelled in the U.K., and we are unable to ask for trans fat labelling because of EU legislation. EU legislation is currently under review, and parts of those review discussions are focusing on whether in addition to provide information on trans fats.



Our answer there is maybe in the future we will be wrapping trans fats into front-of-pack labelling in due course, but at the moment they're not included.

**Ms. Gill Fine:** If I could just add to that, the whole area of fats and getting a better balance in people's diets with regard to fats is also a very important area for the agency. We will be going out to do consultation shortly with a package about reformulation and what can be done to help improve the level of saturated fat—by which I mean to reduce it—in the U.K. We're very concerned that reducing trans fats not result in increasing saturated fats. We think it's important that these be taken in concert.

**The Chair:** Yes. And that's something we should take note of as well. The elimination of trans fat is only part of the answer. It's also about replacing it with the low saturated fat.

Of course, in Canada we feel we have the solution with our low saturated canola oil, so we just take note of that, because Europe might come knocking at our door soon.

I also have a question on the cost of changing the labelling. I know you said there was a 30% uptake in the industry. Has there been a significant cost in changing that labelling, or is it minuscule?

• (1050)

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Most of the businesses we've been working with have been changing their labels inside their normal cycle of label changes. Most of the sorts of products that we've been talking about for front-of-pack labelling are relabelled very frequently in any case in order to keep the packaging looking fresh and exciting for consumers.

This, again, is another advantage of having a voluntary approach. It allows businesses to make changes within their normal labelling cycling changes rather than requiring them to take on additional cost.

**The Chair:** Then the question on volunteer labelling—and this is sort of a follow-up from Mr. Fletcher. You said you were bound because of the EU regulations, but if you were not, would you be pushing for it to be mandatory or would you leave it as voluntary? I can see that if an industry had a green light product and had multiple green lights on their package, they would use it as a marketing tool, and the uptake would be very good, but if you had a product that received a couple of red lights, you might be very reluctant to take part in a traffic light program.

So I'm wondering where you think the saturation level would be, if I might put it that way, with regard to the uptake on the volunteer side.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** I think it's a very complex argument. If you go down the voluntary route, you actually have to win the hearts and minds of industry—

**The Chair:** That's right.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** —so that they understand why they're doing it. Interestingly enough, there is, quite counterintuitively, some evidence of a company's thinking about the fact that its products will be entirely red, but putting that on there because they're clearly placing their product as a treat product, an indulgence product. So in terms of red, it doesn't necessarily work quite the way you would expect it to work.

If the voluntary approach doesn't work over the longer term, would we want to, if we were able to, move to a mandatory system? I think we would certainly want to think about it, but I am not personally convinced that mandatory is best. What you then find is that companies devote a lot of energy to trying to get around the rules, rather than understanding why you're doing it and joining in. We're very anxious to partner with industry so that they genuinely believe and feel and see that they're part of the solution and part of the whole drive towards health, rather than being somebody outside who's dragged kicking and screaming into a new arena.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We have two more members of the committee whose flights were delayed and who are now at the committee, and I'll just yield the floor to see if they are interested in asking a question.

I believe Mr. Dykstra has a question.

The floor is yours.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I hope I'm not going to repeat a couple of things that have been asked already. My apologies for not being able to get here a little earlier.

One of the points you made in your last response was with respect to partnering with industry. It's one of the things we've talked about almost without exception on a number of occasions when we've had witnesses present, and I wanted to get your thoughts on this. In terms of partnering, what do you mean by that exactly? There are two ways of looking at this.

The first is yes, we want to work with industry, and we're government and therefore we want to work with you to an achievable end, and we collaborate and work at it. The second is that you're both investing money into this, both from an overall federal government perspective and also from a private sector business perspective, and I wonder if you could comment on both.

**Ms. Gill Fine:** We're taking quite a broad definition of working in partnership. It is very much about encouraging others to take action where we can't actually make an impact. We don't manufacture any foods ourselves. We don't label it. But what we can do is help set the parameters that other people are working into. It's about encouraging those people to share the same objectives of helping to improve the U.K. diet and the health of individuals.

Earlier on, we were talking about the role of the industry and how more and more of the industry are recognizing they are part of the solution. It's helping to ensure there's a common language and actually getting movements in the right direction.

In terms of making it work, there are different ways in which we're doing that. Some people will not be able to change their products, but they might be able to have smaller portions, or they might be able to provide more information. It's about getting clarity around how we can work together. On the front-of-pack labelling we were able to recommend four core principles, but we didn't say, "It must be in this particular format." We left some flexibility to enable the companies to say how that would fit with their brand image. That I think is the example of how there was some flexibility and dialogue going on with the different industry partners, and also of course with the health organizations and consumer groups, because they are part of this partnership approach.

•(1055)

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** Would it be helpful if I gave you an example?

One of the more successful campaigns we've run has been around the reduction of salt in food. That has been done completely in partnership with industry. It starts by recognizing that industry has to sell products; it has to be profitable. It's no good just telling industry to reduce the amount of salt if they then find there isn't a market for it because consumers don't want to eat it. So at the same time, it's working with industry to reformulate. We've worked very hard with consumers to help them understand that they need to eat less salt and how to work out which foods have less salt. You create a kind of market circle, where we are both incentivizing consumers and incentivizing the industry. The end result for the industry is a win. It is no good trying to push them somewhere that is just going to cost them money and not get them sales.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** From the perspective of government investment, one of the things we have struggled with here is whether we should be doing it in that manner, and I think that's what is supported overall around the table.

One of the difficulties we struggle with is how much investment or how much money does the federal government actually invest in this issue.

My question to you is, what has the government done from a federal perspective in terms of financial investments into this issue since you started in 2004?

**Ms. Gill Fine:** It's very difficult to put actual costs to that basis, but what we have done is invest time and resources from the agency staff for meetings one to one, meetings with trade associations, follow-up discussions, stakeholder fora, and consultations. That we would see as part of our general way of doing business in the nutrition agenda.

We are going to provide some figures about the cost of the campaign. We are going to find that information and send it to you.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** If I understand it correctly, it is more of a partnership with business, which doesn't mean you're throwing millions of dollars at this from a budgeted line item perspective from government.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** No, we're not.

I think the total budget for our communications department, for example, is about £5 million, but not all of that will be on nutrition.

Actually, the amounts of money involved are really quite small. One of the reasons we work in partnership with community bodies, for example, is that they can deliver the message for us through a cascade system. We have a formidable organization here called the Women's Institute, which has branches in every town in the U.K., and we work with them. You have the same.

We've engaged them to talk to groups in their own towns about topics like labelling and nutrition. That doesn't cost us anything, but it's a very powerful tool.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Thank you.

I have one further question, and again I don't know whether this has been asked or not. I noticed that obviously you've taken a multifaceted approach and that there are up to 20 interventions that you've used.

I don't mean to put any of the three of you on the spot, but if you had to determine, out of the 20 interventions, the top two or three or four that worked extremely well, what would those be?

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** I'd think the salt campaign and the reduction of salt is the campaign that is furthest on, and therefore the one where we know most about how effectively it's working. So I think one could choose it from that point.

In 18 months' time you'll need to ask us the question again about traffic light labelling, because I think the early straws in the wind about that are really quite exciting. But we couldn't give you chapter and verse about that for another 18 months or so, until the research has been done.

Do you want to add something, Gill?

•(1100)

**Ms. Gill Fine:** All I would say is that in terms of measuring effectiveness, it's still very early days for the signposting. We are beginning to measure what's happened on the salt awareness. We have tracked that and we do know where that's going, so I would agree with Deirdre, that has been a very effective one, but as the years go by there'll be different measures of effectiveness we can report on.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Davidson.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and hello, everyone. I'm sorry I missed the presentations this morning; the plane was late, but I'm here now, and I have a question for you. I hope I'm not repeating everything that's been said.

The one thing I struggle with, and I think the committee has been struggling with, is the fact that we're dealing with childhood obesity. We know there are family implications in controlling childhood obesity, but my question to you is, what consultation or what interaction, if any, did you have with kids when you were developing the signpost strategy, and how do they relate to it? How does it help them?

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** We did a lot of qualitative and quantitative consumer research that included some focus group work with young people, not with children but with young people, teenagers, and they, like the rest of the population, found the traffic light, colour-coded approach very helpful. They were very attracted to it and felt they could use it to help them make healthier choices.

**Ms. Deirdre Hutton:** I think it might also be worth saying that one of the ways in which we're targeting younger children is around restraints on the television advertising of food that's high in salt, fat, and sugar, because at the moment the advertising to young children is predominantly for food we would consider to be less healthy. To try to shift that balance toward healthier food, we've produced a nutrient profile that is used as a benchmark for companies wanting to advertise their food to children. So if the food is below the benchmark, they're able to advertise. If it's above the benchmark, it means it's less healthy food and they won't be able to advertise. That system is being introduced over the next couple of months.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you.

Going back to your advertising, does Ofcom regulate or control the advertising?

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Ofcom is the broadcast regulator, and their restrictions on television advertising are going to be introduced, so they're in the lead on that.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** And I believe the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice is contracted by Ofcom to regulate the content. Is that correct?

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Yes, that's right.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** And they only regulate the channels and stations licensed by Ofcom? I'm not familiar with your system, so is that—

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** As opposed to satellite channels that might be beamed throughout the country, you mean?

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Yes. I'm wondering what percentage of advertising is regulated.

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** As far as the U.K. is concerned? The vast majority of the television channels received and used in U.K. homes are regulated by Ofcom. The rules that are going to be introduced will have a very significant effect, a huge effect, on television advertising to children in the U.K. It isn't the same situation as pertains, for instance, to Sweden, where they had restrictions on advertising to children. This had a relatively small effect on exposure to advertising because of the many satellite channels received from outside the country. It's a completely different situation in the U.K.

• (1105)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** It is much easier to control in the U.K.

**Ms. Rosemary Hignett:** Yes.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** First of all, I want to thank you very much for being so clear in your presentation, as Ms. Brown alluded to at your very first questioning. You presented yourselves very well and you came out very clearly, and the answers we had will help us a long way in our report.

We don't have any more questions at this time, but we certainly will be looking forward to watching your progress as your country moves along on the signpost labelling, to see how effective it actually is with regard to reducing obesity in your country.

Thank you very much for being with us. We will sign off now. We're very pleased to have had you testify before us.

Ms. Deirdre Hutton: Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I don't know if you have it on your agenda—I'm sure you don't. We have another individual, Richard Caborn, Minister of State, Minister for Sport, and the minister responsible for obesity from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in the United Kingdom, who will be on a videoconference at 11:30. So we can break. This was actually just last minute, but it will be very interesting to hear from the minister in charge of this department.

We should talk about this now. Ms. Gagnon phoned me on Friday. She was a little concerned about our moving into a discussion on a report. I believe she has talked to you. She said she had. I'm very open to that. The idea was to try to bring up the opportunity for any of the new members who had just reviewed the report last week, to be able to talk about it and to put any questions they might have on it. It is open to having some questions on it, but I don't think we want to get into it too far, in fairness, because she can't be here and the NDP can't be here, either. I am open to having questions answered if you want to go that route, but if not, we can take it up at another time. What is your pleasure?

We will also have lunch brought in at noon.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Excellent.

**The Chair:** What is your pleasure? Do you want to get into the report a little bit?

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** I had one question about the report. There were several examples of good things that are happening out there in different locations.

**The Chair:** I will remind you right now we are not in camera.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** That's fine. I don't need to be in camera. I'm not going to use any examples, but I would ask the researchers, among the examples that are described, if there is one from a large urban centre. It seems to me I was reading about smaller cities and rural communities. If there isn't one from a large urban centre, we should have one, because I believe the nutritional problems, the obesity problems, etc., are just the same, particularly in the heart of inner cities, where often there are not the same kinds of grocery stores one finds, say, in the suburbs or in the outer ring of a city.

**The Chair:** We'll have Nancy answer that.

**Mrs. Nancy Miller Chenier (Committee Researcher):** I can speak to that.

Several of them, especially the physical activity ones, do relate to urban centres, but one of the witnesses we had, Silken Laumann, had a really interesting example. I'd like to say that list is probably going to be added to, based on some of the panels that we've had even more recently. We'll definitely keep that in mind for both the physical activity side and the food side.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** There is some evidence, at least in the United States, that in the inner city, in the poorest neighbourhoods, the choice of foods is not as broad as in a suburban supermarket, but also that the prices are actually higher for the same items in the heart of downtown. It's pretty scary when you think a lot of the people are on social assistance and have less money for food. It seems to me that we have to look at the inner city as well as other settings.

**The Chair:** Yes, that point is well taken.

Okay, perhaps there are other questions with regard to that, or we could spend a few minutes and talk generally if there are questions on the report, as long as we don't get into it too far.

• (1110)

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Chair, Susan is not here, Christiane's not here, and the NDP are not here. It sort of defeats the purpose.

**The Chair:** It does to some degree, although we're just answering questions such as Bonnie had with regard to urban input. I think it was a good one.

Are there any others?

Colleen, this is all new to you. If you have any questions, generally, without disclosing what's in the report, I think that would be fair. If not, we will take up the report debate at another time.

We will break and then reconvene at 11:30.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•

• (1130)

**The Chair:** We'll call the meeting to order again.

We have with us Richard Caborn, the Minister for Sport and the minister responsible for obesity.

That's a difficult portfolio you have, Mr. Caborn.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** We certainly want to thank you for clearing your schedule and being able to present before the committee.

We're in our last few sessions before we issue a report on childhood obesity. We're very much looking forward to hearing your presentation. We talked to some of the people from the Food Standards Agency earlier.

We're very much looking forward to what you have to say with regard to what's happening in the United Kingdom on this file.

We'll hear from you, and then we'll ask you some questions. I want to thank you for making the time.

The floor is yours.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn (Minister of State (Sport), Department for Culture, Media and Sport, House of Commons of the United Kingdom):** Thank you very much.

I'm a minister now, but I used to be the chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry many years ago, so I have had the experience of being in your position.

Can I first of all thank you very much for inviting the Commons from the U.K., because this is clearly an issue that many countries around the world are actually sharing, and that's the difficulty of obesity and being overweight.

As far as England is concerned, half of our adults now are either overweight or obese, and on top of that, about one in four of our children are either overweight or obese. It is projected that if the current trends continue, something like 20% of our child population will be obese by the year 2010. That in reality is one million young people in the United Kingdom.

The overall cost of that obesity to the National Health Service—and you may well have the statistics—is estimated to be about £1 billion per year, and the cost to the economy is estimated to be between £2.3 billion and £2.6 billion a year. That is expected to rise given the trends that are with us at the moment; if they continue, that will have gone to £3.6 billion by the year 2010.

So we can see that both our countries, Canada and England, are facing real problems with obesity, and that's not just true in the developed world but also in the developing world. All the information with us to date is showing that nobody has actually managed to hold the rise; we all seem to be facing the same challenges

Whilst there is no single factor to which the rise in childhood obesity can be attributed, it is really about calories in, calories out. Indeed, that's what we're now trying to address in the United Kingdom. The factors also go far afield as architecture and town planning, given that the last towns planned in England—the “new towns”, as we call them—were designed around the motor car. We're now challenging some of our architects very much whether they will continue to design stairways out of buildings and escalators and lifts into them. Indeed, we now ought to move back to where we were before.

So we know very generally that we need to have this cultural shift, which we think is very important to get across the whole of the community. That's why departments right across government—the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills—are also involved in trying jointly to tackle the question of obesity, and that I only have part of the responsibility for obesity, as you rightly say.

We, as a government, have committed ourselves to halt the year-on-year increase in obesity among our children under 11 years of age, and we hope we can achieve that by the year 2010. That is a joint target, as I said, for the three departments: my own department, the DCMS, or Department of Culture, Media and Sport; along with the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills.

I think we are making some headway in this direction. You have been talking to the independent broadcast regulator in the U.K., Ofcom, and they've now published their new restrictions on the advertising and promotion of children's food and drink high in fat, salt, and sugar. This means there is a total ban now on adverts for foods with high fat, salt, and sugar on all children's programs, and indeed on all dedicated children's channels. We are now monitoring that closely to see what the impact of the Ofcom measures are across all the media and whether or not there's going to be a real change in the nature and balance of food promotion. When we've got that information, we'll decide what future action is necessary—and possibly that could lead into legislation as well.

Advertising is but one part of the approach to this. We are now consciously building back, as I said, the question of physical activity into our children's lives. There are two areas on which we've honed. First of all, there is unstructured play and physical activity in children's early years, and there we support the development of physical literacy skills for later in life. We also believe that part of that cultural shift, which is important, is about the health and participation benefits that come out of that unstructured play and physical activity.

● (1135)

In August of last year we published *Time for Play: Encouraging greater play opportunities for children and young people*. It set out what the government is doing in this area, as supported by an investment of about £155 million.

Those moneys came out of the big lottery fund here in the U.K. and are now been invested in the development of free and open access play provisions, targeting the areas of greatest need and deprivation, particularly around unemployment and social problems.

We have also made excellent progress in schools, and I think this has been one of our successes. In April 2001 we started school sport partnerships. Our target there was to give every child, from the age of five to 16, two hours of quality physical activity or sport every week. In 2001 about 20% to 25% of our school population was estimated to be getting two hours of quality physical activity or sport. Last year, in 2006, we had actually reached beyond the 75% target we had set ourselves. We got to 80%.

In figures, that means we've gone from 2 million young people in our schools to 5 million young people who are now receiving two hours of quality physical activity or sport. That's 6 million hours a week more that our young people are receiving in their schools.

This has been driven by our 450 school sport partnerships. One sports college, eight secondaries, and an average of forty primaries make up a school sport partnership, with the output of that two hours.

By 2010 we're hoping to have increased the two hours to four hours, so two hours in the curriculum and two hours beyond the school gates. Indeed, we're now moving and investing in that area through the club structures, through our governing bodies of club structures, and also with the investment into facilities that will be used beyond the schools.

We're also developing role models to go around to the schools. For instance, Kelly Holmes, our double gold medallist at the Athens

Olympics, has now signed up as one of our sporting champions. I must admit that it has a tremendous effect within the school system when people like Kelly Holmes go into the schools and start talking to young people about the need to get quality physical education and sports as well.

So we are trying to tackle it on a number of layers. One is obviously on the question of diet. We have a number of initiatives with regard to five pieces of fruit per day and so on. We're also making sure that advertising does not encourage young people, children particularly, to take foods that are not healthy for them. We're doing that through Ofcom.

We've moved on to the unstructured physical activity and play for young people, particularly up to the age of five. In our school structure, through our 450 school sport partnerships, we are now changing a culture to one where young people are experiencing sports and physical activity to a minimum of two hours a week. That, we believe, has had quite a significant effect in the recent past.

So that is our approach to date, but we are looking to other countries as well—Canada, Scandinavia, Europe—to see whether other good examples and projects are being undertaken and whether we can share those experiences to make sure we can collectively tackle what to us are major problems: overweight and obesity.

● (1140)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We certainly are in this together, not only our country and your country, but many countries around the world. We're killing our kids with kindness, it seems, and we have to do something about that. In our country it's amazing that we have such a large problem, but it's not recognized by very many parents. We certainly do know that we have to recognize the problem before we can fix it.

I thank you for your presentation.

Now we'll open the floor to questioning, starting with Ms. Brown.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Thank you very much, Minister, for joining us.

You mentioned \$155 million to be spent from lottery funds on, I think, the Ofcom part of your strategy. We heard about \$260 million Canadian being used by the Food Standards Agency.

Do you have any figure for us on how much money this project is costing across government when you include education and skills, public health, transport, etc.? Has anybody added those figures up?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** I don't think we've added the figures up like that. Could I just correct you and say that it's £155 million that we're investing on children's play initiatives? That's on the informal and unstructured.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Sorry. It's children's play.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** That's what we call children's play, or the unstructured part of that. That's £155 million that we're investing directly from central government into that. We're investing in excess of £1 billion on school sports development and facilities, and that's from a national level.

It's very difficult to give you a figure because local authorities also have a major investment in this area as well. If we were to put it in a ballpark figure, I would think that in terms of the unstructured children's play and the investment we've put into our schools, it would be around about £1.5 billion.

I'm just looking at my notes on the schools, and we're putting £1.5 billion into transforming school sports. That's in the five years leading up to 2008. On top of that, if you look at the investment we're putting in through local authorities, it's around £1 billion a year.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Thank you very much.

The people from the food agency were talking about having 55 million consumers enrolled in a study to try to get some idea as to what is working and how well it's working. Do you have some way of evaluating these dollars that flow through the idea of sport and play? Do you have a methodology to evaluate what kinds of results you're getting?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We are doing that in terms of the schools with BMI, the body mass indicator, which we are now bringing in through the Department for Education and Skills. We are monitoring. We have just done the active people survey. It is the most comprehensive survey that has ever been undertaken in England about activity. It goes down to what we call a borough, which is a small sample. So we now have what we call that active people survey, which shows us the level of activity we have today. We will be getting that and measuring our performance.

Beyond the investment into schools, we have also committed ourselves to getting the nation active by 1% per annum, not on the World Health Organization's criterion, but one that we've brought forward ourselves. We think it's realistic, and that is three half-hour sessions of moderate physical activity per week, per person. We want to increase the participation in that by 1%, year on year. Again, we're monitoring that against the active people survey that was completed a couple of months ago.

• (1145)

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Thank you.

Our situation here would be much like yours, in that there are several federal departments involved in trying to tackle this problem, or ones that will be involved if we get this project off the ground.

How did you achieve this necessary collaboration between and among departments? Do you have, say, a committee of deputy ministers or some such mechanism? How did you get everybody on board to tackle this, or was it an initiative of the Prime Minister?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** It was an initiative of the Prime Minister to start with, there's no doubt about that, recognizing that physical activity in our young people, not just on the question of health, but also the questions of social inclusion, of education, and of academic attainment levels, could be addressed in part by having our young people more physically active and indeed involved with

sports. That was how we started talking across departments. The Department for Education and Skills and my department have had a very clear working relationship for some six years now, in driving forward the school sports partnership.

If I can just explain it very briefly, the school sports partnership is a partnership for roughly 100,000 of the population. There are 450 of these partnerships in England. They comprise one sports college, eight secondary schools, and an average of between thirty to forty primary schools. Involved in those are 3,000 school sports coordinators. A coordinator is a teacher who has two to three days a week of organizing sports within the schools and between the schools and developing the whole physical activity agenda. They are back-filled by another teacher, and that's where the big investment comes in.

In terms of the link between the primary schools to their secondary school—the feeder schools—we have 18,000 primary-link teachers who have 24 days a year, who are again paid for and are back-filled by other teachers, so that they can organize sport and physical activity, again within the schools and between the schools. The output for that, as I said, is to give every child two hours of quality physical activity or sport every week from the ages of 5 to 16.

What we have seen from that is that academic attainment levels have gone up. We believe we have now settled the question of the health of our young people, particularly around type 2 diabetes. Thirdly, we find that where young people are engaged in sport and physical activity, they are less likely to get involved in activities of a disruptive nature, such as crime and social disorder.

So we are working on three agendas there: on health, on education, and on social inclusion.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Monsieur Luc Malo.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for joining us today, Minister.

If I understand correctly, you are attempting to bring about a genuine change in culture. You want the public to move from a more sedentary lifestyle to a more active one.

Can you tell us how much time you have given yourself to bring about this major change? What means do have available or what tools will you be using to assess if indeed members of society have acquired new and healthier habits?

[English]

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** On the very clear output that we are trying to achieve—and we're talking now about young people in our schools, in our education system—our first target was to have 80% of the population doing two hours of quality physical activity or sport every week by the year 2008. By the year 2010, we want to move to having every child doing four hours of physical activity, with two within the curriculum and two outside the curriculum.

We also want to affect eating habits as well, and that is being done by a series of innovations; of education within schools; by banning certain types of advertising on children's television; and also through a process of education across the schools' population about healthy lifestyles. So we have very clear outputs that we are trying to achieve at certain dates on the calendar in the years ahead.

In terms of the general population, against a survey we did that was completed last year, we know the activity levels of the general population now. Roughly a third of the population is doing three half-hours of moderate physical activity per week. We want to move a further third of the nation over the next period by increasing the physical activity levels of the nation by 1% per annum. We will be measuring that against the data from what we call the active people survey, which was done last year.

So we have very clear outputs that we are looking for, and we're investing in certain programs and projects to make sure they happen.

Does that answer your question?

• (1150)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Thank you.

I also understood you to say that you want society to be more inclusive.

Are you planning to, or have you already put in place specific measures to promote a healthier lifestyle among lower income or economically disadvantaged people?

[English]

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Yes, at a number of levels we are targeting the more deprived areas. First of all, slightly away from the health issue but on social inclusion, we're developing a number of community sports committee coaches who will go into various systems, particularly the probation service, and help to bring young people back into society through the medium of sport. Many of our young people on the estates, in inner city areas, tend to be at the bottom of the economic ladder and those who are likely to fall out of society the quickest. We believe they could also be brought back into society through the medium of sport and physical activity, and we have some very good examples of that in operation.

On the wider issue of sport and physical activity to the more deprived areas, yes, we are focusing the investment strategies into those areas to make sure we have the facilities, in terms of buildings, but also, importantly, in terms of people, whether they be coaches, teachers, or indeed volunteers. Again, we're investing in those areas, and there's a bias to the investment strategy into those areas as well.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** I must also admit that our figures on the number of overweight or obese people are as distressing as yours. As the committee chair was saying earlier, it's important to be aware of the problem.

What did you do in your country to increase public awareness of the extent of the problem? What measures were put in place to achieve this objective?

[English]

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Obviously, as a government, through our normal advertising programs, we are trying to bring that to the attention of the British public, but I do believe now even the more popular press are taking up the message and indeed are very helpful in getting the message across that a healthy lifestyle is a much more desirable lifestyle than one that's associated with obesity and overweight. There is a general campaign, but also that general campaign now is being picked up by the popular press, and many programs, activities, are actually run by the media to show the problems of obesity and overweight.

So I think there is a cultural shift. People are now recognizing that life itself is at stake if we continue on the path we've had in the recent past. When I look at young people here in the U.K., 30 years ago a child got 70% more physical activity than a child today. Therefore, to turn that around is a major cultural shift by the whole of the nation and not just one part of it.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Malo, your time is done.

We'll now move to Mr. Dykstra.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's interesting listening to the background and the similarities in terms of my school days. It wasn't an argument about setting minimums; it was trying to keep all of us in school and coming in right after recess because we'd keep playing football and we'd keep playing outside. We had gym teachers. We'd never talk about whether or not it should be a minimum of two hours. It was about how to keep the kids in the classroom longer. So your point about the shift is very well made, Richard.

I wondered, just to refer a little bit back to that, in terms of the lottery fund, I'm not familiar with how it works in the U.K. Here it's basically a provincial entity; the provinces run them, versus the federal. How does it work in the U.K.?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We have one national lottery, and that's divided into four parts. Of that, 50% goes toward what we call the big lottery fund, which has certain themes, of which healthy lifestyle is one, but then there are three specific areas for which the other 50% is divided—heritage, the arts, and sport. Each of the organizations responsible for those three areas—heritage, arts, and sport—receive a third of the 50%. My math isn't very good, but it's a third of the 50% of the lottery. To sport, that is worth about £220 million a year.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** How did you develop the two-hour minimum and moving that forward to get to four hours over the next number of years? How did you set the threshold?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We set the threshold with our advisors from the Department of Education, and in partnership with them we are trying to achieve that. It was an agreement particularly driven by the Department of Education, and we accepted their analysis of that.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** So you've hit an 80% target with schools. I'm trying to understand that if you set the program up and requested or ordered this—depending on whether you did this through legislation or regulation—why you wouldn't have had 100% participation by all schools.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We're moving toward that, but we have set ourselves a realistic target of 75% of pupils by 2006. The target will rise to 85% by 2008. We then want to increase it from two hours to four hours for every child by 2010.

We really need to get the investment into infrastructure, school sports coordinators, and coaching. So there are a number of areas in which we were massively under-invested to achieve those activity levels. One can set these targets, but you have to be realistic about the investment and how quickly that investment can actually be realized in terms of buildings, people, and support staff.

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** I know we're dealing with things on a sort of macro level. You may or may not have received a number of letters, but I wonder what the overall reaction from parents has been. Have they found this to be the right thing to do? Was it difficult for them to organize, or has there been a positive reaction? More importantly, do they understand the issue they're dealing with in terms of childhood obesity?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** I think they are becoming more and more aware of the problems of overweight and childhood obesity. There are no doubts about that. Broadly speaking, society is now concerned about obesity and will support measures to start to address it.

In the five years from 2001 to 2005, we have moved the school population from two million to five million, so three million young people are now doing two hours of physical activity or sport who weren't doing that in 2001-02. That is a massive shift in young people's physical activity. We want to build on that.

I think that's having an effect on their parents as well. It was very interesting a few weeks ago when I had Weight Watchers and Slimming World address these issues of obesity and overweight. Over the last two or three years they have gone from just programs on calories in to including calories out as well. Now 50% of the programs at Weight Watchers and Slimming World are about diet, but 50% are about physical activity. What is also very interesting is that they are both now involving the family unit in a way that never was the case a few years ago.

I think there is now a shift in culture, driven partly by the media and partly by what we're doing in schools, but there's a realization of the family unit in addressing these issues in a more collective way.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dykstra.

Ms. Carolyn Bennett.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Thank you very much.

Thank you again for your example of being able to cross government departments in your approach.

How important are realistic targets in getting government departments to work together on things?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** I think it is realistic. The results from the investment in sport and physical activity are now being proven. Until three or four years ago, sport and physical activity were not really on the government or indeed the political agenda. I think they are now, probably in a way that has not been the case before. I think the more we incentivize that through finance and investment the more effect it will have.

It is interesting how we're engaging the private sector in this debate. A healthy workforce being a more productive workforce is one that will hit the bottom line of those companies in a really steep way. The more progressive companies are joining with us to make sure that the 1% per annum we are trying to achieve in terms of physical activity for the adult population is now finding a home, even inside the private sector. There is a shift.

You are also right in making sure that local authorities, through their planning departments, and architects, through the buildings they are designing, all have physical activity at the heart.

The other area we're trying to address—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Your Prime Minister was very bold early on in his tenure in setting hard targets on cardiovascular and other things that bureaucrats tend to be risk averse about. In terms of the political will to be potentially embarrassed by having a target we don't meet, I think what I'm hearing is that we have to have hard targets if we're going to do anything.

The second part is that we have a healthy school consortium here in this country. It is only the ministers of health and education. I know the sport ministers feel they should be part of that consortium. With the work in smaller communities in Canada—maybe it's happened in the gym of the community centre and not in the school—there has to be these sorts of partnerships.

Would you suggest that our committee recommend that they include the sport ministers in the school health consortium?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** To be quite honest, I think they'd be very naïve if they did not. Sport is one of the major drivers. Young people, broadly speaking, want to play sport, whether it's a team sport or some of the less structured sports. Dance is one that we are looking at very carefully now. There are a lot of young boys who are taking dancing, which in terms of physical activity is absolutely fine.

Going back to the point you made about bureaucrats tending to be risk averse, they're no different here than in Canada. But we've overcome that, and they are now joining in a very positive way.



On the other point, if you can't measure it, I don't think you can manage it. In that sense, we have to have these measurements. I don't think measurements are an end in themselves, but they're a very good guide to whether you're actually achieving your objectives.

• (1205)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** In our country, we have a bit of what we call the “playground to podium” approach. There's an ongoing fight, which is not all that healthy, between physical activity and actual sport, where performance is measured. People are not thrilled that somebody has just gone for a walk. How have you handled that?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We actually had to go through a learning curve on that. The vast majority of young people want to be involved in team sport for the competition. We have competition managers now. That is very, very important as far as sport is concerned.

With many of the informal sports such as skateboarding, BMXing, dance, and others, young people will not necessarily be involved in team sports and hard competition.

I believe we have to evolve a system that allows that flexibility to engage all those young people. It is amazing how some young people start an informal sport but go into formal sport. It is about keeping the comprehensive structure in play.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** We are now in the position of having to have sport animators to teach kids how to play tag.

I guess I'm a little worried that we haven't taken the idea of physical literacy in our school system seriously enough, that if kids' parents don't play ball or run with them they end up with no confidence in those things. Do you have the concept of physical literacy there? Are kids encouraged to run and to be able to catch a ball?

We used to have performance levels of gold, silver, and bronze, where kids were asked to try out for these various levels. Do you have anything like that to encourage kids from a very early age to know how to throw and catch a ball?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Very much so. We're doing that now, and we've come from a very low base, as I said a little earlier. Only 20% of our kids got two hours of sport or physical activity. We've moved that.

You're absolutely right in what you're saying about physical literacy: it is important. We have now put a whole series of pilot schemes into the primary sector in particular, where we believe it will have the greatest gain. We're invested in that physical literacy now.

I think also informal play is important. We're now in the informal play, marking out every school playground so that young people can actually play games themselves—organize their own games—and get the type of physical literacy you're referring to as well. We are still going through quite a steep learning curve in these areas, but we believe we're making some progress.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Bennett.

For the committee's information, I think there was an announcement this morning of \$5 million to reinvigorate the program you were just alluding to.

Ms. Davidson.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your comments. They've been very enlightening.

One of the things we have found in this study we've been doing is that our stats are very similar to yours when it comes to the numbers who are obese and overweight in the country.

The one thing we found was that parents do not recognize that their children are obese. I'm wondering, did you have that difficulty in the U.K., and if you did, how did you address it and make that awareness come through for the parent?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We have recognized it. We haven't gotten the solution. At this point, there are discussions going on with the Department of Health, my department, and the Department of Education on what should be on a child's end-of-year report. Besides his academic attainment, we believe, and I believe, that the BMI ought to be there as well. This is the discussion that's going on, and it's one that I think is getting quite a lot of credence.

The argument is that once you've told the parent what the problem is, you also then have to say what the solution to it is. This is an area now under discussion with the three departments—Health, Education, and my own department—to take forward, and I think we will be doing that in the next year.

• (1210)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you.

I think you've made great strides, going to the two hours per week, with up to 80% compliance with it, and in hoping to move to the four hours.

You said that when you moved to the four hours, two hours would be within the curriculum and two hours would be outside the curriculum. What is “outside the curriculum”, and how do you control that? If it's not within a system where you can monitor it and set the criteria for it, how do you get that extra two hours?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We're invested in a number of areas now with our national governing body. We think, first of all, the cultural shift will be that when a young person has had the experience—and hopefully a nice experience—of participating in sport, they will want to continue beyond the school gate and therefore will join the local cricket club, multi-sports club, rugby club, or whatever. We think it's important to be able to do that.

One of the fault lines I inherited as sport minister was that 70% of our young people, when they left school, did not continue in active sport. We are trying to address that by first of all giving young people an experience in school. When I say that, I mean we are exposing our young people in schools to around 12 to 14 different sports so that they can experience sports that they hopefully will enjoy. Beyond the school gate, we want to make sure they continue that, not just in school but well beyond school life also, so we're trying to encourage your people to join sports clubs.

We've invested very heavily in two areas. One is through the governing body and the club structure and volunteering, and the other is in coaching. We've now invested some £60 million over three years in 3,000 community coaches, who are working within the communities—away from schools, in their communities, with the sports clubs—to try to create a more sustainable infrastructure of sport beyond the school gate. We will measure that through an organization called Sport England, which is a body that is fully funded by government.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Your program is for ages 5 to 16. Is 16 the mandatory age to which kids have to go to school? Was physical activity or physical education ever mandatory in the schools?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** No, it's not mandatory. The only thing that is mandatory, actually, is swimming, but that's for safety reasons, not physical activity reasons. There is now an acceptance, within the curriculum, that everybody does their two hours. That I think is now being broadly accepted by the sheer force of the argument that where we have increased physical activity in sport, academic attainment level has gone up, truancies have come down, exclusions have come down, and the schools are playing a wider role in the community in which they are located. So it's a win-win for everybody. That is now I think accepted right across the education structure.

Beyond 2016, we are now working on further education and our universities in a project similar to the one we've had in our secondary structure.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** So another leg of the program, if you will, is to extend it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Fletcher for five minutes.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** I just have a couple of questions.

Canada, I'm pleased to say, announced this morning significant funds for a Participaction program, which is bringing sports standards to schools throughout the country. We also introduced a tax credit to encourage parents to enrol their kids in sports.

One thing that Canada and the U.K. have in common is that we have the Olympics coming to our respective countries. One is in 2010, and of course yours is a couple of years after that. Are you utilizing that event to encourage sport among young people to deal with obesity, and if so, how?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Yes, very much so. In fact, we were looking at some stats the other day that showed that the nation has never been more united than on the day of July 6, 2005, when we actually won the Olympics. The whole nation was behind that and still is behind it. It's been a fantastic opportunity to engage more people in thinking about sports and physical activity, probably more than anything else could.

We are capitalizing on the Olympic "gold dust", as we call it. Indeed, one of the narratives that we were able to win the Olympics on back in Singapore in July 2005...we said to the IOC that we wanted to use this great opportunity to reconnect young people to

sport, not just in the U.K., but around the world, through the five rings and the power of the Olympic movement.

Indeed, we're doing that in a number of areas here in the United Kingdom. But we're also working with the Commonwealth, and wider than that, in terms of trying to reconnect young people in the less well off countries in the world with sports. So in a number of ways, we are using the Olympic gold dust, as we call it.

● (1215)

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** In fact, Canada will be hosting the Commonwealth Games, too, in a few years.

When you say that you are engaging, could you give us specific examples of how you're leveraging the Olympics to encourage more activity or to tackle childhood obesity?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** First of all, there are the U.K. School Games. The very first one we ran was last year, in Glasgow. The next one will be in Coventry, and then we will be announcing, in a few weeks' time, the other four. So every year now we are building up through every school sport partnership, through to the regions, and then nationally, and every year, starting last year, as it were, we will have the U.K. School Games. We will be changing that to the Schools Olympics next year. By the time we get to 2009-10, we're hoping to have 15 disciplines of sport run at the national level each year. And that will be building up through our school sport partnership competition. Every region and nation of the United Kingdom—nine regions, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland—is also pursuing, on the Olympic ideal, activity levels in each of their regions and nations.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Minister, can we get our people to contact your people to find out some more specifics on this?

Perhaps we can include it in our report, Mr. Chairperson.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Yes, very much so. My officials are here now, and there are a few officials who I think my officials will be working with. Whatever documentation you want we will make sure is forwarded to you. On the Olympics, specifically, I'll make sure that note has been taken of that. On the U.K. School Games and on our nations and regions committee, which we now have working on the 2012, we will send that over.

Also, in terms of our international policy, we've targeted five nations at the moment, which will move to 20 nations, and I will send you the outline of planning on that as well.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** I look forward to plagiarizing your ideas.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** We share them internationally.

**The Chair:** Okay, that's enough dirty talk.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** We'll go on to Ms. Chow.

You have five minutes. Please go ahead.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Speaking about sharing and plagiarizing, I understand that Ofcom, which is the Office of Communications, said late last fall that they're going to prohibit ads for foods and beverages high in fat, salt, and sugar for all TV programs that appeal to children under the age of 16; the use of celebrities and characters licensed from third parties, such as cartoons; and claims will also be prohibited in ads.

I understand it's supposed to start in early 2007. Is that happening yet?

Then I have another question about funding.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Yes, it has started. Ofcom announced the new rules on November 17, 2006, which will be published in March. There will be full implementation on July 1.

There'll be no what we call fat, salt, and sugar advertising in children's programs, including those for pre-school children; no HFSS advertising on dedicated children's channels; no HFSS advertising on programs of particular appeal to children under 16; no celebrities or licensed characters to be used in ads for those; and no nutritional health claims in the fat, sugar, and salt ads aimed primarily at children.

They are very specific, and Ofcom's assessment is that this package of rules will reduce children's exposure to advertising's impact by 41% for 5- to 15-year-olds and 51% for 5- to 9-year-olds. That will commence operation later this year.

• (1220)

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Wow. Congratulations on that. That's reducing children's exposure to ads by a huge percentage.

On another front, I understand there is a proposal in front of your Parliament for £240 million to subsidize healthy ingredients for children's food, meal programs in schools. How is that coming along? I understand it's a proposal. Is it approved yet? What's the chance of it coming into effect?

I know you're already investing a huge amount of money in school meal programs, but this sounds like an additional £240 million.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Jamie Oliver was the chef who went in, and when the Prime Minister asked him, he went around to do the survey.

There's a big investment now going into children's school meals, as we call them. The increase in the subsidy on those meals is what you're referring to, and those figures are exact. The increase means that hopefully they can get a more balanced diet into schools.

To a large extent, this was driven by Jamie Oliver's intervention, which got quite a lot of publicity, and subsequently we changed the investment in school meals.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Has that already been approved, so it's coming online and not just a proposal?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Yes, it's on course now, it and started in the 2005-06 financial year.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** My understanding is that the £240 million is the addition that came online. What is the total amount you spent on school meal programs, or is that a percentage increase?

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** I don't know, but I will make sure that all the figures for the investment in school meals, both baseline and additional, are sent to the clerk of your committee.

I don't have those figures at my fingertips; it's not my department. I'll make sure those figures are furnished to your committee.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

We look forward to that information. We thank you for spending the time with us this morning. It's late afternoon there.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** I'm just going out for dinner.

**The Chair:** I certainly appreciate your making time in your day to be able to present to us. It was very interesting and informative. Thank you very much.

Thank you, committee members, for good questioning.

**Right Hon. Richard Caborn:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll take up the discussion on the report at another time in the future.

We call this part of the meeting adjourned.

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