

OPEN LETTER

December 7, 2018

Honourable Senators
The Senate of Canada

Subject: Passage of Bill S-228 – restricting marketing of junk food to children

Dear Senators,

As a group of medical doctors, public health and nutrition experts concerned about the millions of children living in Canada that will be affected by diet-related disease we are writing to express our support for the speedy passage of Bill S-228. This legislation proposes to restrict the marketing of junk foods to children 12 years and under and was spearheaded by your former Senate colleague Nancy Greene Raine.

This bill was introduced in the Senate in September 2016, thoroughly debated, reviewed and unanimously passed by the Senate in September 2017. It passed the House in September 2018. The Senate is now being asked to approve **two minor amendments from the House.**

Bill S-228 is necessary because:

- Over 90% of food and beverage product ads viewed by kids online and on TV are for unhealthy products.
- Kids between the ages of 2 and 11 years are bombarded with 25 million food/beverage ads a year on their top 10 favourite websites.
- The cost of diet-related disease in Canada was \$26 billion in 2015.
- Kids 9-13 years of age consume almost 60% of their calories from highly processed foods, the most of any age group.

This legislation will protect the health of the most vulnerable in our society, our children. It will help address the rising tide of childhood obesity and the related burden of chronic disease that develops later in life. The reality is that unless things change, this will be the first generation of kids who will not live as long or as healthy lives as their parents.

Bill S-228 is based on international evidence and similar measures have been successfully implemented in other countries. It will support parents who are doing their best to instill healthy eating habits in their children. Marketing influences the types of food kids pester their parents to buy - marketers know that 90% of food and beverage purchases are driven by kids; they rely on the 'nag factor' they create as kids pester their parents for certain products.

Many Senators have heard pleas from the food and beverage industry, however, it's important that we speak up for those that this legislation will protect; our children. Let's be clear about the facts:

- Children's community sports teams will NOT be impacted. The government clearly announced last December that the sponsorship of kids' sports will be exempted.
- Defining which foods should be subject to children's marketing restrictions has to be done within the regulations; legislation doesn't deal with these types of details. Industry's request to undertake this definition within the legislation is simply a delay tactic and nothing more than an attempt to kill Bill S-228.
- Bill S-228 would have virtually no impact on the bread industry given that very few breads are advertised to kids. Bread will continue to be produced, advertised, sold and enjoyed by Canadians.

Honourable Senators, a May 2018 Pollara Strategic Insights public opinion poll found that 82 per cent of Canadians support the measures outlined in Bill S-228. For the sake of children living in Canada, we need your support to pass Bill S-228 before the Senate rises for the holiday break.

SIGNATORIES



Penny Ballem, MSc, MD, FRCP, FCAHS. Clinical Professor, Department of Medicine, University of British Columbia. Senior Fellow, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto. Former Deputy Minister of Health, British Columbia. Former City Manager, City of Vancouver. National board member, Heart & Stroke.



Thomas E Feasby, CM, BSc(Med), MD, DSc(Hon), FRCPC. Emeritus Professor of Neurology and Past Dean, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary. National board member, Heart & Stroke.



David Jones MD, MHSc, LLD(hc), DSc(hc), CCFP, FCFP, FRCPC, FACPM. Canada's First Chief Public Health Officer. National board member, Heart & Stroke.



Mary R. L'Abbe, PhD. Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences. Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto.



Thomas J Marrie, CM, MD, FRCPC, FRCS, MACP, FCAHS, DM LLD. Dean of Medicine (Emeritus), Dalhousie University. National board member, Heart & Stroke.



Andrew Pipe, CM, MD, FRCSPC(Hon). University of Ottawa Heart Institute. Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa. Chair, Board of Directors, Heart & Stroke.



Jeff Reading, MSc, PhD, FCAHS. BC First Nations Health Authority Heart Health and Wellness Chair based at St. Paul's Hospital. Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University.



™The heart and / icon and the Heart&Stroke word mark are trademarks of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.