

# STATEMENT

## on Parliament's Vote Denying Consumers of Nutrition Info

**OTTAWA (November 9, 2006)** — Bill Jeffery, LLB, national coordinator of the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, issues the following statement in response to last night's vote in Parliament.

*We're encouraged that these important issues have moved from the fringe onto the centre stage of national politics. Canadians are entitled to know what is in the foods they eat, especially when it affects their health or pocketbooks. It's unfortunate that MPs were persuaded to oppose the bill by a disingenuous lobbying campaign mounted by the restaurant industry.*

*Conservative Cabinet Minister Greg Thompson once told the House of Commons: "We are here...to support the bill. What the member is attempting to do would be very difficult to argue against." Yet last night, he and all of his conservative colleagues opted to vote against the bill despite widespread public support and a knee-high stack of expert reports recommending the measures it proposed. Though the legislation was supported by former senior Liberals Cabinet Ministers Bill Graham, Ralph Goodale, and Carolyn Bennett, it failed to attract enough other votes from opposition MPs to pass. Of greater concern, some MPs actively lobbied and voted against the bill despite credible evidence that their loyalty their own families' food companies might conflict with their duty to serve the public interest.*

*If Parliament won't hold these food companies to account, we will put their marketing practices and claims under the microscope until another opportunity to advance this proposal arises.*

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**For more information, call:** Bill Jeffery, National Coordinator of CSPI at 613-244-7337.

Note to Editors: Nutrition information is now mandatory on many pre-packaged foods, but Bill C-283 would have closed ill-deserved exemptions from those regulations won by meat packers and huge restaurant chains. And the bill's ingredient labelling proposal -- similar to rules already (or soon to be) in place in 29 countries around the globe -- would have ensured that Canadians also see the amounts of key ingredients that are actually used in processed foods whether fruit, vegetables, whole grains, or fillers (like refined flour).

Federal government scientists and economists recognize mandatory point-of-sale food information can efficiently reduce the burden of diet-related disease, if visible prior to purchase. Every year, diet-related cases of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain cancers prematurely kill tens of thousands of Canadians and cost us \$6.6 billion in increased healthcare costs and lost wages.

The November 1, 2006, *Globe and Mail* editorial stated "“Fast-food and dine-in restaurants could be required to post similar labels [to pre-packaged foods] -- not breaking down the contents of each meal, obviously...Better to...educate the public and, a crucial point, to give them the information they need to make a decision.”"

**The Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is an independent health advocacy organization with offices in Ottawa, Washington, D.C. and Dallas. CSPI's Ottawa advocacy efforts are supported by more than 100,000 subscribers to the Canadian edition of its *Nutrition Action Healthletter*. CSPI does not accept industry or government funding. *Nutrition Action* does not carry advertisements.**