

ABOUT CSPI

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is a non-profit, non-partisan, consumer health advocacy organization focussing on nutrition and food safety. CSPI is funded by more than 100,000 Canadian subscribers to its *Nutrition Action Healthletter* and does not accept funding from industry or government.

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian economy and health care system labour under the burden of preventable diet-related cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and osteoporosis that, every year, prematurely claim the lives of an estimated 25,000 Canadians and, according to Health Canada, cost the economy \$6.6 billion in health care costs and lost productivity. We consume too much of foods high in sodium, added sugar, saturated fat, *trans* fat and calories, and too little of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Food companies heavily market calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods and aggressively lobby governments to ensure the marketability of their food products is favourably affected by public policies that should, instead, put the public's health first.

One of the most effective ways to shrink health care waiting lists, increase productivity, and reduce health care costs is to prevent these diseases in the first place. But, as demographer David Foot stated:

The Canadian health care system...has a bias toward acute care -- that is, the patient gets help when disease causes a serious episode of ill health. The system doesn't focus enough on preventative medicine to avoid such episodes.

AU SUJET DU CSIP

Le Centre pour la science dans l'intérêt public (CSIP) est un organisme sans but lucratif et autonome qui défend la santé publique, plus particulièrement la nutrition et la sécurité alimentaire. Ses efforts sont financés par plus de 100 000 abonnés au *Nutrition Action Healthletter*. Le CSIP n'accepte aucun financement de l'industrie et du gouvernement.

INTRODUCTION

L'économie et le système de soins de santé du Canada s'affaissent sous le fardeau des cancers, des maladies du cœur, des accidents cérébrovasculaires, du diabète et de l'ostéoporose liés à l'alimentation, qu'il est possible d'éviter. D'année en année, ceux-ci ravissent trop tôt la vie de quelque 25 000 Canadiens et coûtent 6,6 milliards de dollars en soins de santé et en perte de productivité, selon Santé Canada. Nous consommons beaucoup trop d'aliments calorifiques et riches en sodium, en sucres ajoutés, en gras saturés et *trans*, et trop peu de fruits, de légumes, de céréales entières et de légumineuses. Les compagnies alimentaires inondent le marché d'aliments qui ont une valeur élevée en calories, mais une faible teneur en nutriments, en plus de plaider avec vigueur auprès des gouvernements pour assurer la qualité marchande de leurs produits alimentaires et faire adopter des politiques publiques qui leur sont favorables, au détriment de la santé de la population.

L'un des moyens les plus efficaces de raccourcir les listes d'attente, d'accroître la productivité et de réduire les coûts de santé consiste d'abord à prévenir ces maladies. Cependant, comme le déclarait le démographe canadien David Foot :

[TRADUCTION] *Le système de soins de santé canadien [...] a une préférence pour les soins de courte durée – il n'aide les patients à obtenir de l'aide que lorsqu'ils traversent un épisode de maladie grave. Le système ne mise pas assez sur la médecine préventive afin d'éviter de tels épisodes.*

1. Ban advertising directed at children.

Most children's TV programs and magazines are rife with commercial advertisements for health-eroding sugary soft drinks, candy and breakfast cereals, greasy fries and burgers, or products that discourage physical activity such as video games, movies and television shows.

Weak enforcement of already weak regulations and industry codes means that Canadian children (especially outside Québec) are continuously targeted with commercial promotions for foods and playthings that increase children's risks of developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some forms of cancer and osteoporosis in later life – and increase their risks for diabetes, liver disease, and obesity even while they are still young. For the first time in recent history, Canadian youth may have shorter life expectancies than their parents.

In 1978, Quebec passed legislation banning advertising directed at children under age 13. In 1989, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld Quebec's ban in a landmark *Charter of Rights* ruling on the issue of freedom of expression. The Court described children's special vulnerability to advertising as follows:

“...advertising directed at young children is *per se* manipulative. Such advertising aims to promote products by convincing those who will always believe.”

During the past three years, expert reports published by the Fed./Prov./Terr. Ministers of Health, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, a coalition of two dozen Canadian health and citizens groups (led by CSPI), the US National Academies' Institute of Medicine, the American Psychological Association, the UK Food Standards Agency, the World Health Organization, and the World Health Assembly have advocated regulatory controls on marketing to children out of concern about the commercial exploitation of mentally vulnerable populations, or for fear of the adverse health consequences of exposing physically vulnerable populations to health-eroding messages.

1. Interdire la publicité destinée aux enfants

La plupart des émissions télévisées et des publications pour enfants sont truffées de messages commerciaux annonçant des boissons gazeuses, des céréales pour le déjeuner et des bonbons sucrés ainsi que des frites et des hamburgers gras, tous dommageables pour la santé, outre des produits qui incitent à l'inactivité physique, comme des jeux vidéo, des films ou d'autres émissions télévisées.

L'application timide des codes de l'industrie et de règlements déjà faibles fait en sorte que les enfants du Canada (surtout ceux à l'extérieur du Québec) se retrouvent bombardés d'annonces qui font la promotion d'aliments et de jeux qui augmentent leurs risques de développer plus tard des maladies cardiovasculaires, certaines formes de cancer, le diabète et l'ostéoporose – et accroissent leur prédisposition au diabète, aux maladies du foie et à l'obésité, même jeunes. Pour la première fois de l'histoire récente, l'espérance de vie des enfants canadiens pourrait être plus courte que celle de leurs parents.

En 1978, le Québec avait adopté une loi interdisant la publicité destinée aux enfants de moins de 13 ans. Toutefois, en 1989, la Cour suprême du Canada retirait l'interdiction québécoise par un arrêt-clé sur la liberté d'expression dans la *Charte des droits et libertés*. La Cour avait alors ainsi décrit la vulnérabilité particulière des enfants à l'égard de la publicité :

« [...] la publicité destinée aux jeunes enfants est manipulatrice en soi. Elle promeut des produits auprès de ceux qui y croiront toujours d'emblée. »

Face à la crainte qu'on exploite des populations mentalement vulnérables ou qu'on assiste aux conséquences négatives de l'exposition de populations physiquement vulnérables à des messages néfastes pour la santé, différents rapports d'experts publiés au cours des trois dernières années par les ministres fédéral, provinciaux et territoriaux de la Santé, l'Institut canadien d'information sur la santé, le médecin hygiéniste en chef de l'Ontario, une coalition réunissant plus d'une vingtaine de groupes de citoyens et de promotion de la santé canadiens (dirigés par le CSIP), le National Academies' Institute of Medicine (É.-U.), l'American Psychological Association, la Food Standards Agency (R.-U.), l'Organisation mondiale de la santé et l'Assemblée mondiale de la santé militent en faveur de mécanismes pour réglementer la publicité destinée aux enfants.

QUESTION 1: Will you and your party amend existing federal legislation or regulations governing marketing practices to prohibit, throughout Canada, all commercial advertising and promotions targeted at children under age 13 (as the Government of Québec has done, within the limits of its constitutional authority, for nearly three decades)?

QUESTION 1 : Votre parti et vous modifierez-vous les lois ou règlements fédéraux qui régissent actuellement les pratiques de commercialisation afin d'interdire, dans l'ensemble du Canada, toute annonce ou promotion ciblée sur les enfants âgés de moins de 13 ans (comme le fait le gouvernement du Québec, dans les limites de ses pouvoirs constitutionnels, depuis près de trente ans)?

Bloc: The Bloc Québécois opposes advertising that directly targets children under age 13. But our party notes that in Quebec, there is already a legislative framework that carefully controls advertising aimed at youth. We therefore feel that if the federal government wishes to establish its own guidelines in this area, within the framework of its constitutional jurisdiction, it should respect the system of regulations that is already in place.

Conservative: *No response.*

Green: While not itemized in the 2006 platform, the Green Party is currently developing a policy related to childhood advertising with the view that the federal government must take aim at problems related to excessive consumption in our society. Elected Green Party MPs will work to ensure Canadians are given the full picture about the products they consume in order to promote a healthy diet and lifestyle.

Liberal: Children's relationship with the media is complex. Exposure to mass media (i.e., television, movies, video and computer games, the Internet, music lyrics and music videos, newspapers, magazines, books, advertising, etc) presents both benefits and risks for children.

To function in today's world, children need develop critical thinking skills to help them understand the messages that inform, educate and entertain them everyday. Parents and educators in Canada have a crucial role to play in helping children sort through the positive and negative aspects of media. Children whose parents monitor their TV watching and who discuss media content and images with them are more likely to be aware of the risks associated with the media and less vulnerable to manipulation.

The Liberal Party of Canada believes that we must work toward improved enforcement of age restrictions in the sale of media products. With partners, we will develop monitoring guidelines and resources addressing the effects of violent, sexualized and harmful images on children, and promote and encourage alternative, positive forms of entertainment. We will work toward improved protection against all forms of exploitation on the Internet. We will encourage media responsibility and support media awareness and consumer literacy.

NDP: New Democrats support the idea of studying the amendment of existing federal legislation and regulations governing marketing practices to prohibit advertising and promotions targeted at children under age 13 as the Government of Québec has done, within the limits of its constitutional authority.

Bloc : Le Bloc Québécois s'oppose à la publicité ciblant directement les enfants de moins de 13 ans. Notre parti constate toutefois qu'au Québec, il existe déjà un cadre législatif qui circonscrit bien la publicité destinée aux jeunes et de ce fait, estime que le gouvernement fédéral devrait respecter la réglementation déjà en place s'il désire lui-aussi, dans le cadre de ses compétences constitutionnelles, baliser ce secteur.

2. Expand mandatory nutrition labelling.

Since December 2005, very good federal regulations have required most food companies to disclose the amounts of key nutrients on new "Nutrition Facts" labels. Agriculture and Agri-food Canada predicts that this information will help Canadians make modest changes to their diets that will reduce health care costs and increased economic productivity by a cumulative total of \$5 billion over the next two decades. That benefit is twenty times the cost to industry of modifying labels, but still saves only about 5% of the total cost of diet-related disease.

Most fresh meat (often, but not always, a major source of saturated fat), and even huge chains of restaurants (where nearly half of the Canadian food dollar is spent) are completely exempt from the new labelling requirements. Nor do the new regulations require disclosure on packages of processed food of the percentage-by-weight of key ingredients, especially those with important health implications (e.g., amounts of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, legumes or added sugars).

Proposed private members legislation aimed at expanding the current nutrition labelling rules to address these shortcomings was debated in the House of Commons three times since April 2003, and was the subject of hearings before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health in May 2004. Amidst recent political instability, no final decisions were taken in Parliament on the proposals. *Bill C-379* (and previously *Bill C-398*) proposed to expand nutrition label rules by requiring that:

Full nutrition info be disclosed on packages of fresh meat, poultry and seafood (products that were largely exempted from the new regulations),

The percentage-by-weight of key ingredients (especially ones related to health, like fruits, vegetables, added sugars, whole grains, and legumes/beans) in processed foods be reported on labels, and

The number of calories and (space permitting) the amounts of saturated plus trans fat, and sodium for each item on menus or menu boards in large chain restaurants.

2. Élargir la portée de l'étiquetage obligatoire des aliments

Depuis décembre 2005, une très bonne réglementation fédérale exige de la plupart des compagnies alimentaires qu'elles affichent les quantités des principaux nutriments sur les nouvelles étiquettes d'information nutritionnelle. Selon Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada, cette information aidera les Canadiens à apporter des modifications à leur régime qui, quoique légères, généreront des retombées considérables, soit 5 milliards de dollars au total au cours des vingt prochaines années, en réduisant les coûts des soins de santé et en augmentant la productivité économique. Si ces retombées représentent vingt fois la somme que coûte la modification des étiquettes à l'industrie, elles correspondent à seulement environ 5 p. 100 du coût total des maladies imputables à l'alimentation.

La plupart des produits de viande frais (souvent, mais pas toujours, une importante source de gras saturés) et même les chaînes de restauration tentaculaires (qui grugent presque la moitié de chaque dollar dépensé par les Canadiens pour s'alimenter) échappent totalement aux nouvelles exigences sur l'étiquetage. De plus, la nouvelle réglementation n'impose pas l'affichage du pourcentage par poids des principaux ingrédients sur l'emballage des aliments transformés, surtout ceux qui ont une incidence sur la santé (p. ex., les quantités de fruits, de légumes, de céréales entières, de légumineuses ou de sucres ajoutés).

Le projet de loi d'initiative parlementaire proposé pour élargir la portée des règles en vigueur en matière d'étiquetage nutritionnel et en pallier les lacunes a fait l'objet de débats à la Chambre des communes à trois reprises depuis avril 2003, en plus d'avoir été abordé lors des audiences du Comité permanent de la Chambre des communes sur la santé, en mai 2004. En raison de la récente instabilité politique, aucune décision n'a été prise au Parlement à son sujet. Le *Projet de loi C-379* (et auparavant le *Projet de loi C-398*) proposait d'élargir la portée de l'étiquetage des aliments en exigeant :

- (1) que l'information nutritionnelle complète soit affichée sur les emballages des viandes, volailles et fruits de mer frais (produits largement exemptés des nouveaux règlements);
- (2) que le pourcentage par poids des principaux ingrédients contenus dans les aliments transformés (surtout ceux qui ont une incidence sur la santé, comme les fruits, les légumes, les sucres ajoutés, les céréales entières et les légumineuses) soit indiqué sur les étiquettes;
- (3) que le nombre des calories et (si l'espace le permet) la quantité de gras saturés et *trans* ainsi que de sodium soient indiqués pour chaque plat dans le menu ou le menu-panneau des grandes chaînes de restauration.

QUESTION 2: Will you and your party help capture some more of the health and economic benefits of disease prevention by extending mandatory nutrition labelling in the manner proposed in *Bill C-379* or by enacting regulations to the same effect?

QUESTION 2 : Votre parti et vous contribuerez-vous à l'obtention des autres avantages que promet la prévention des maladies sur la santé et l'économie en faisant élargir la portée de l'étiquetage obligatoire des aliments, comme le proposait le *Projet de loi C-379*, ou en adoptant des règlements en ce sens?

Bloc: The Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-379, which was tabled in Parliament during the last session.

Conservative: *No response.* [Editor's Note : Though the former *Progressive Conservative Party* Health Critic, Greg Thompson, supported *Bill C-398*, and the former Canadian Alliance Party leader Stockwell Day appeared to support the principle of nutrition labelling (before the 2000 election), all Canadian Alliance and Conservative Party of Canada MPs speaking in the House of Commons since 2000 have vigorously opposed this initiative.]

Green: Yes. We are committed to requiring mandatory labelling of GE (genetically engineered) content in foods, and we are also proposing that food labels indicate the source of production, percentage of profit paid to grower, and more detailed nutritional information.

Liberal: The Liberal government fully supports the objective of reducing the processed trans-fat content of foods consumed by Canadians. We are proud of the fact that Canada was the first country to introduce mandatory nutrition labeling, which included trans-fat on pre-packaged foods. We believe that nutrition labeling will help consumers to make healthy food choices. That being said, we also believe that when reducing or eliminating trans-fats in foods, it is important that the trans-fat be replaced by more healthy alternatives.

The new nutrition labeling regulations require that Calories and the content of 13 core nutrients, including trans-fat, be listed on the labels of most pre-packaged foods by December 2005 in a table entitled "Nutrition Facts".

Major companies have already announced that they have reformulated, or are intending to reformulate, their products to reduce or eliminate the trans-fat. Foods sold in restaurants and in-store baked goods are not required to be labeled under the new regulations. However, some restaurant chains provide relevant information on a voluntary basis. Consumers are encouraged to avoid fried foods and high fat baked goods and desserts, request nutritional information on unlabelled foods and choose lower-fat foods when eating out.

This Liberal government will also actively encourage the restaurant and food service industry to reduce the trans-fat content of the foods they sell, and will work with the industry to identify ways to improve the nutritional quality of fats and oils.

We will monitor the levels of trans-fats in the Canadian diet to see if the objective to reduce trans-fats in foods is being achieved. The Government of Canada will consider further actions in this area if required, such as extending labeling requirements to restaurant foods, and imposition of limits on the trans-content of fats and oils.

NDP: The NDP believes, as in the case of trans-fats, that sometimes labeling is not enough to prevent the harm that can be caused by a variety of ingredients and excess fat. New Democrats support studying, as just one step in a greater awareness of healthy eating habits, the health and economic benefits of disease prevention by extending mandatory nutrition labeling.

Bloc : Le Bloc Québécois appuie le principe du projet de loi C-379, qui a été déposé au Parlement lors de la dernière session.

. Shift GST from healthful foods to nutrient-poor foods.

Nearly all developed countries (and many, if not most, developing countries) apply GST or a similar Value Added Tax to food and other consumer products. While Canada relies on general consumption taxes to a much *lesser* extent than other OECD countries, (15% of all Canadian tax revenues, compared to the 19% OECD average), more than one third of Canadian food sales are subject to GST, drawing more than \$2 billion in federal tax revenue. But, that tax only occasionally (and, even then, *clumsily*) differentiates between nutrient-rich and nutrient-poor foods.

For example, the *Excise Tax Act* imposes GST on soft drinks, potato chips, and candy sold in retail stores, and soft drinks, greasy burgers and french fries sold in restaurants. However, the *Act* also imposes GST on comparatively healthful food choices like club soda, fruit trays, and small bottles of water sold in retail stores, or low fat milk, and many salads and vegetable dishes when sold in restaurants. Meanwhile, many unhealthful foods sold in retail stores are tax-free (i.e., zero-rated for GST) such as sugary breakfast cereal, salty soup, salty caviar, fatty types of meat and cheese, and *trans*-fat-laden shortening.

Shifting GST from healthful foods to unhealthful foods would help ensure that federal tax policy reflects and supports national nutrition recommendations, rather than undermining them. Independent researchers examining conditions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Norway, Tanzania, and China have lent credence to the importance of price effects on nutritional status. Though their key findings may appear like common sense today (i.e., price affects demand), nutrition and health effects evidently were not anticipated or were considered to be unimportant when the GST replaced the Manufacturers Sales Tax in 1991.

3. Retirer la TPS des aliments sains pour ne l'appliquer qu'aux aliments ayant une faible teneur en nutriments

Presque tous les pays développés (et de nombreux pays en développement, sinon la plupart) perçoivent la TPS ou une autre taxe sur la valeur ajoutée sur les aliments et d'autres produits de consommation. Si le Canada compte beaucoup *moins* que les autres pays de l'OCDE sur les taxes de consommation générales (celles-ci s'élevant à 15 p. 100 de toutes les recettes fiscales, par comparaison à 19 p. 100, en moyenne, dans les pays de l'OCDE), plus du tiers des produits alimentaires vendus au Canada sont assujettis à la TPS, rapportant plus de 2 milliards de dollars en recettes fiscales au gouvernement fédéral. Cependant, les distinctions que fait cette taxe entre les produits ayant une teneur élevée en nutriments et les autres sont rares (et maladroites). Par exemple, la *Loi sur la taxe d'accise* impose habituellement la TPS sur les boissons gazeuses, les croustilles et les bonbons vendus dans les magasins au détail, ainsi que sur les boissons gazeuses, les frites et les hamburgers gras vendus dans les restaurants. Cependant, elle exige également que la TPS soit perçue sur les produits alimentaires sains, comme l'eau gazéifiée, les plateaux de fruits et certains formats d'eau embouteillée vendus dans les magasins au détail, de même que sur le lait faible en matières grasses et de nombreux plats à base de salades et de légumes vendus dans les restaurants. Entre-temps, il est possible d'acheter bon nombre de produits néfastes pour la santé qui sont détaxés (c'est-à-dire exemptés de la TPS), comme des céréales pour le déjeuner sucrées, des soupes salées, des viandes et des fromages gras et du shortening bourré de gras *trans*.

Le choix de déplacer la TPS des produits sains vers ceux qui sont néfastes pour la santé aiderait à s'assurer que les politiques fiscales fédérales reflètent et soutiennent les recommandations nationales sur la nutrition, et non le contraire. Des chercheurs indépendants qui étudient les conditions prévalant aux É.-U., au R.-U., au Danemark, en Norvège, en Tanzanie et en Chine ajoutent foi à l'importance des prix sur l'état nutritionnel. Bien que leurs principales conclusions semblent couler de source de nos jours (c.-à-d. l'influence des prix sur la demande), tout indique que les effets sur la nutrition et la santé n'ont pas été prévus ou considérés importants au moment où la TPS a remplacé la taxe sur les ventes des fabricants, en 1991.

QUESTION 3(a): Will your party conduct a review of the *Excise Tax Act* rules governing food taxes with the aim of eliminating tax incentives to consume nutrient-poor foods and disincentives to consume healthful foods?

QUESTION 3(a) : Votre parti examinera-t-il les dispositions de la *Loi sur la taxe d'accise* qui régissent les taxes sur les aliments en vue d'éliminer les mesures fiscales encourageant la consommation d'aliments à faible teneur en nutriments et décourageant l'achat de produits alimentaires sains?

Bloc : The Bloc Québécois is aware of the importance of a sound diet for health. But we believe that the problem of obesity must be approached first of all from the standpoint of education—through teaching of good eating habits and proper labelling of food contents.

As regards labelling, the Bloc Québécois has on many occasions expressed its concern about the lack of mandatory labelling on genetically modified foods. Until now, the federal government has been content to adopt a voluntary policy for labelling of GMOs, which has proven to be a failure and does not enable citizens to make informed choices. Our party urges the government to adopt a mandatory GMO labelling policy that is achievable and that includes sufficient measures to help the members of the industry to implement it.

Conservative: *No response.*

Green: Yes. The Green Party would increase taxes on tobacco products, alcohol and junk food, and use other fiscal tools to promote health-conscious regulation of the food industry. We would tackle this issue by providing more information to Canadians about healthy food choices and lifestyles.

Liberal: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a sales tax applied to a very broad base of goods and services in Canada. As one of the Federal Government's most important sources of income, the tax applies to all but essential goods, such as basic groceries, prescription drugs, and residential rent.

Tax Status of Health Food

Regarding food, only *basic* groceries are exempt from the GST, reflecting the view, widely held by Canadians, those goods fundamental to survival should not be taxed. This exemption does not include, for example, prepared or processed foods available in grocery stores because these are not considered basic. Natural health products, though they act as food supplements, do not fall under the designation of *basic* foods exempt from sales tax.

Regarding other food items, it was decided that items such as soft drinks and similar beverages, confections and snack foods would be taxable, along with restaurant and cafeteria foods.

Tax Relief

The government believes it is more appropriate to provide tax relief to low income Canadians than to exclude more items from the GST. The GST rebate program provides \$3 billion annually in tax rebates to low income families and individuals.

NDP: New Democrats realize that the proliferation of nutrient-poor food is a major factor in poor health for millions of Canadians. The NDP support investigating the possibility of a review of the Excise Tax Act rules governing food taxes with the aim of eliminating tax incentives to consume nutrient-poor foods and disincentives to consume healthful foods.

Bloc : Le Bloc Québécois est conscient de l'importance d'une alimentation saine pour la santé. Nous croyons cependant que le problème de l'obésité doit être abordé en priorité sous l'angle de l'éducation; par l'enseignement de bonnes habitudes alimentaires et par l'étiquetage du contenu des aliments.

En matière d'étiquetage, le Bloc Québécois a fait part à maintes reprises de ses inquiétudes quant à l'absence d'un étiquetage obligatoire des aliments génétiquement modifiés. Jusqu'à maintenant, le gouvernement fédéral s'est contenté d'une politique d'étiquetage volontaire des OGM qui se révèle être un échec et qui ne permet pas aux citoyennes et citoyens de faire des choix éclairés. Notre parti exhorte le gouvernement à adopter une politique obligatoire d'étiquetage des OGM qui est réalisable et qui comprend des mesures suffisantes pour aider les acteurs de l'industrie à la mettre en œuvre.

QUESTION 3(b): How much financial resources will your party commit to promote healthy eating, particularly in light of Health Canada's estimate that the ill-effects of poor diet cost the economy at least \$6.6 billion per year?

QUESTION 3(b) : Combien de ressources financières votre parti allouera-t-il à la promotion d'une alimentation saine, compte tenu plus particulièrement des prévisions de Santé Canada selon lesquelles les effets d'un régime carencé sur la santé coûteront au moins 6,6 milliards de dollars par année à l'économie?

Bloc: The Bloc Québécois notes that within its own health and education systems, Quebec is already investing resources to make people more aware of the importance of a healthy diet. Because it is the Government of Quebec that has the expertise and that can intervene with all of the institutions of the Quebec health system as well as with all educational institutions in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois believes that it is this government that should make the decision to set priorities and develop action plans within Quebec. The Bloc Québécois recommends a simple approach to avoid costly duplication: any additional funding granted by Ottawa should be paid directly to Quebec and the provinces so that they can strengthen their own health and education systems and thus better inform their citizens about the importance of eating well to live a healthy life.

Conservative: *No response.* [Editor's Note : The Conservative Party of Canada voted in favour of the main Liberal budget on May 19, 2005, authorizing \$300 million over five years for disease prevention and continuation of a national diabetes strategy, plus more than \$40 million per year to implement the Integrated Pan Canadian Healthy Living Strategy.]

Green: The Green Party of Canada has promised \$500 million over 5 years to fund a comprehensive strategy to promote healthy and active living. Part of this plan would be to encourage a healthy diet and increasing the amount of food being grown locally and organically.

Liberal: In October 2005, this Liberal government announced an investment of \$300 million over five years, and \$74.4 million per year ongoing in funding under the Integrated Strategy on Healthy Living and Chronic Disease. The integrated approach to chronic diseases has been endorsed by the provincial and territorial governments of Canada in the First Minister's Health Agreement of September 2004.

Scientific evidence demonstrates, for example, that healthy eating and physical activity protect against many chronic diseases, including cancer, heart disease and stroke, and diabetes, so it makes sense to integrate certain health promotion efforts. Likewise, the major chronic diseases share several common risk factors, such as obesity.

In fact, the principles of integrated action mandate a balance between integrated and disease-specific efforts. That is exactly what the Integrated Strategy on Healthy Living and Chronic Disease will do – integrate efforts where appropriate and make disease-specific ones where necessary.

Bloc : Le Bloc Québécois constate que le Québec engage déjà, à l'intérieur de ses propres systèmes de santé et d'éducation, des ressources pour conscientiser les gens à l'importance d'une alimentation saine. Puisque c'est le gouvernement du Québec qui possède l'expertise et qui peut intervenir auprès de tous les établissements du réseau québécois de santé tout comme des établissements d'éducation, le Bloc Québécois estime que c'est à ce gouvernement que revient la décision d'établir les priorités et de développer des plans d'action sur son territoire. Le Bloc Québécois préconise une approche simple pour éviter les doublons coûteux : tout financement supplémentaire octroyé par Ottawa devrait être versé directement au Québec et aux provinces afin qu'ils puissent consolider leurs propres réseaux de santé et d'éducation et donc, mieux informer leurs citoyens et citoyennes de l'importance de bien manger pour avoir une vie saine.

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In fact, the principles of integrated action mandate a balance between integrated and disease-specific efforts. That is exactly what the Integrated Strategy on Healthy Living and Chronic Disease will do – integrate efforts where appropriate and make disease-specific ones where necessary.

NDP: New Democrats will commit to promoting and supporting healthy eating in Canada to offset the costs and ill-effects of poor diet. The NDP believes that Canada needs to re-invest in physical activity. To that end, and to keep Canadians, especially Canadian children, healthy and active, New Democrats have worked hard to label and ban trans-fats in food and have called for the restoration of a national program to prevent illness by encouraging physical activity and promoting proven alternative and traditional health practices.

4. Publicly fund nutrition counselling services under Medicare.

The only way that most Canadians can access publicly funded services of a qualified dietitian is to be admitted to hospital after a heart attack or other catastrophic health event requiring hospitalization and, often, expensive medical, surgical or drug treatment. At that point, nutrition counselling can only prevent further damage after most of the harm has already been done.

QUESTION 4: Will you and your party ensure that publicly-funded preventative nutrition counselling services are made available to Canadians before they become grievously ill and hospitalized?

4. Financer publiquement les services de consultation sur la nutrition par l'entremise de l'assurance-maladie

La seule façon par laquelle les Canadiens peuvent accéder aux services publiquement financés d'un diététiste qualifié est de se faire admettre à l'hôpital après une crise cardiaque ou un autre grave problème de santé entraînant l'hospitalisation et, souvent, des soins médicaux, des chirurgies ou des médicaments au coût exorbitant. Dans un tel contexte, les conseils sur la nutrition ne peuvent que prévenir l'aggravation des dommages après le pire.

QUESTION 4 : Vous assurerez-vous, votre parti et vous, de rendre accessibles des services de consultation préventifs sur la nutrition, publiquement financés, aux Canadiens, avant qu'ils ne tombent gravement malades et ne soient hospitalisés?

Bloc: The Bloc Québécois is fully aware of the importance of preventive health measures for all the people of Quebec. But our party, which operates in the federal arena, defends the consensus and the jurisdiction of Quebec and its right to manage those areas that come under its jurisdiction, including health.

Our party therefore encourages the federal government to instead take steps within its own sphere of action by increasing its funding efforts so as to correct the fiscal imbalance. That would enable Quebec and the provinces to provide more adequate funding for the prevention and support programs that they already have.

Conservative: *No response..*

Green: Yes. The Green Party would support a host of measures to improve prevention as part of the federal government's overall health strategy. In fact, the major thrust of our healthcare platform is disease prevention, ensuring that the majority of Canadians eat healthy foods, exercise regularly, and are protected from harmful pollutants.

Bloc : Le Bloc Québécois est pleinement conscient de l'importance que revêt la prévention en santé auprès des Québécoises et des Québécois. Toutefois, notre parti, qui œuvre sur la scène fédérale, défend les consensus et les compétences du Québec et son droit à gérer les domaines qui relèvent de sa compétence, dont la santé.

Notre parti incite plutôt le gouvernement fédéral à agir à l'intérieur de son champ d'action et donc à rehausser son effort financier en corrigeant le déséquilibre fiscal. Cela permettrait au Québec et aux provinces de financer plus adéquatement des programmes de prévention et de support qui existent déjà.

Liberal: The Liberal government, through Health Canada, and its many partners have undertaken an awareness-raising initiative to help Canadians understand and use the new nutrition labeling regulations. We believe that this will help Canadians make better choices about their nutrition, and their health.

Health Canada developed an Educators' Kit to help dietitians and other health providers educate Canadians on nutrition labeling. There is also a distinct kit for educators working with First Nations and Inuit communities. These Kits contain fact sheets, model presentations, posters, and sample nutrition facts. Both Kits are posted on Health Canada's website.

Another important tool that the Liberal government makes available to Canadians to assist them in making healthy food choices is the Food Guide, which is currently under revision. Changes will recommend foods that are available, affordable, and reflect the country's cultural diversity. The Food Guide is an important tool to promote healthy eating among all Canadians. It is used by health professionals, educators and consumers alike.

NDP: New Democrats realize that good nutrition is vital to overall good health and would actively study the development of publicly-funded preventative nutrition counselling services are made available to Canadians before they become grievously ill and hospitalized.

<p>5. Ban the use of partially hydrogenated vegetable oil in processed foods. In 1990, Health and Welfare Canada (as it then was) identified the human health risks posed by trans fatty acids found mainly in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVOs) and asked the food industry to limit the use of these oils in processed foods. Since then, it has become clear that the health risks of these synthetic fats are even worse than previously thought – yet Canadian food companies are using more of them in more foods than ever before (and more than almost any other country) leading to the premature death of an estimated 800 to 4,000 Canadians annually. In November 2004, a strong majority of MPs supported a motion aimed at developing a strategy for ridding the Canadian food supply of trans fat contained in partially hydrogenated vegetable oil.</p>	<p>5. Interdire le recours aux huiles végétales partiellement hydrogénées dans les aliments transformés En 1990, Santé et Bien-être social Canada (comme était auparavant désigné ce ministère) avait reconnu que les acides gras <i>trans</i> surtout présents dans les huiles végétales partiellement hydrogénées posaient des risques pour la santé humaine. Il avait donc demandé à l'industrie de l'alimentation d'en limiter le recours dans les aliments transformés. Depuis, il est devenu évident que les risques de ces gras synthétiques sur la santé sont pires que ce qu'on avait imaginé, en dépit du fait que, plus que jamais, des compagnies alimentaires les utilisent dans encore plus d'aliments (et encore plus au Canada que dans n'importe quel autre pays), contribuant au décès de 800 à 4 000 Canadiens par année, selon les estimations. En novembre 2004, une forte majorité de députés ont appuyé une requête visant à élaborer une stratégie pour mettre fin à l'intégration de gras <i>trans</i> aux huiles végétales partiellement hydrogénées que contiennent les produits alimentaires canadiens.</p>
<p>QUESTION 5: Will you and your party actively support a ban on <i>trans</i>-fat-laden partially hydrogenated vegetable oils similar to the ban already in place in Denmark, and generally as recently proposed in Parliament by Pat Martin's <i>Bill C-220</i>?</p>	<p>QUESTION 5 : Votre parti et vous appuieriez-vous activement l'interdiction des huiles végétales partiellement hydrogénées composées de gras <i>trans</i>, comme l'a fait le Danemark et ainsi que Pat Martin le proposait récemment au Parlement, avec le <i>Projet de loi C-220</i>?</p>

<p>Bloc: The Bloc Québécois is in favour of such a restriction. The Bloc Québécois is committed to working with the other political parties present in Ottawa so that Canada can act firmly by limiting the amount of <i>trans</i> fats allowed in food. It is the view of the Bloc Québécois that industrially produced <i>trans</i> fatty acids must be eliminated.</p> <p>Conservative: <i>No response.</i> [Editor's Note : The vast majority of Conservative Members of Parliament opposed a motion in Parliament urging the Liberal Government to put in place such a regulatory ban. Despite Conservative opposition, the Motion passed 193-73.]</p> <p>Green: Yes. This is just one of the food regulations the Green Party would endorse in the House of Commons.</p> <p>Liberal: In November 2004, the Liberal government announced that Health Canada, in conjunction with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, would work through a Multi-Stakeholder Task Force to develop recommendations and strategies for reducing trans-fats in Canadian foods to the lowest levels possible.</p> <p>The Task Force committed to issue an interim report with recommendations regarding public education, labeling, and any possible immediate opportunities for the food service and food processing industry to reduce trans-fats. It also committed to issue a final report to provide the Minister with recommendations for an appropriate regulatory framework, and for the introduction of healthy alternatives to limit trans-fat content in processed foods sold in Canada.</p> <p>The Task Force released the interim report in August 2005. It identified Health Canada's nutrition labeling regulations as key in helping consumers reduce trans-fat intake</p> <p>The final report is expected at the beginning of 2006. It will contain recommendations for an appropriate regulatory framework, and for the introduction and widespread use of healthy alternatives to trans-fats.</p> <p>Editor's Note: Also see the Liberal Party Leader's response to question 2 related to trans fat.</p>	<p>Bloc : Le Bloc Québécois est en faveur d'une telle interdiction. Le Bloc Québécois s'engage à travailler, en collaboration avec les autres partis politiques présents à Ottawa, pour que le Canada agisse fermement en limitant la quantité de gras trans permise dans les aliments. Pour le Bloc Québécois, les acides gras trans produits industriellement doivent être éliminés.</p>
<p>NDP: Yes. As previously stated, Bill C-220 is an NDP initiative.</p>	

6. Implement a strategy to reduce preventable disease by promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity.

More than three years ago, the federal-provincial-territorial Ministers of Health announced plans to develop an "Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy" (see: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hl-vs-strat/pdf/hls_e.pdf) to promote healthy eating and increased physical activity. In November 2005, they adopted a strategy which consists of often tentative undertakings to, for instance, (at p. 40) "explore regulation of advertising and marketing to children" or to "undertake feasibility studies on fiscal measures to encourage healthy living."

Given the undisputed facts that, every year, *preventable* diet-related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, certain forms of cancer, and obesity cause tens of thousands of premature deaths in Canada, cost the national economy billions of dollars, and exacerbate waiting times for healthcare, and given that these massive human losses are on-going, accumulating, and jeopardising the long-term sustainability of publicly-funded Medicare:

6. Mettre en œuvre une stratégie pour réduire les maladies qu'il est possible de prévenir par une alimentation saine et une activité physique plus soutenue

Il y a plus de trois ans, les ministres fédéral, provinciaux et territoriaux de la Santé annonçaient des projets pour la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie pancanadienne sur les modes de vie sains (voir : http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hl-vs-strat/pdf/hls_f.pdf) afin de promouvoir une bonne alimentation et une activité physique accrue. En novembre 2005, ils ont adopté une stratégie composée d'initiatives souvent timides pour, par exemple, « examiner les règlements sur la publicité et le marketing auprès d'enfants » ou « réaliser une étude de faisabilité sur les mesures fiscales visant à encourager les modes de vie sains » (page 48). Compte tenu de certains faits incontestés, notamment que des maladies liées à l'alimentation, *qu'il est possible de prévenir*, comme les maladies du cœur, le diabète, quelques formes de cancer et l'obésité, causent des milliers de décès prématurés au Canada chaque année, coûtent des milliards de dollars à l'économie nationale et allongent exagérément les listes d'attente pour des soins de santé, et compte tenu que ces pertes de vies humaines massives et constantes s'accumulent et menacent la durabilité à long terme de l'assurance-maladie publiquement financée :

QUESTION 6: What policy reforms and program initiatives would you and your party take to reduce the burden of preventable diet-related disease

QUESTION 6 : Quelles réformes stratégiques et quelles initiatives touchant les programmes votre parti et vous lancerez-vous pour réduire le fardeau des maladies liées à l'alimentation, qu'il est possible de prévenir?

Bloc: The Bloc Québécois believes that with regard to information about food and diet, the primary problem is the underfunding associated with the fiscal imbalance, which is depriving Quebec and the provinces of the revenues they need to fulfil their responsibilities and hence is forcing them to play catch-up if they want to provide proper support for their prevention and support organizations. The Bloc Québécois believes that the correction of the fiscal imbalance will enable Quebec and the provinces to more fully develop services for their people within their areas of jurisdiction and ensure that with regard to health, their citizens have access to effective tools to help them meet new public health challenges.

Conservative: *No response.*

Green: Disease prevention is one of the main goals of the Green Party's health platform, and we emphasize the links to diet. The Green Party would work to provide Canadians with healthy, environmentally conscious and affordable food by vastly increasing the amount of organic agriculture in Canada. We hope to ensure the provision of fresh, local food to communities both urban and rural. Specific programs could be developed to support organic agriculture and health at the same time. For example creating links between local farms and schools will help children develop an understanding of dietary health and community well-being. From poverty to fast food to inactive lifestyles, the sources of hunger and food-related illness in today's society are many, and the Green Party would work to address these issues from many angles.

Specifically, the Green Party of Canada would work to :

- Provide more information to Canadians about healthy food choices and lifestyles.
- Assist provinces and municipalities to implement urban agriculture and food share programs to reduce the cost of healthy food.
- Target programs to reduce and eliminate systematic health inequities facing First Nation communities, new Canadians and other marginalized populations.
- Support a nation-wide healthy lunch and snacks program from Kindergarten through to Grade 12.

We hope that these answers have given you a good idea of what the Green Party of Canada hopes to achieve in relation to the issues you have raised. The Green Party understands the bigger picture. The real answer is to go beyond a health care system to develop a fully-integrated health system, one that focuses on solving the underlying problems affecting our well-being, not just treating the symptoms. We can shift our way of life, we can shift away from our fast food consumption culture and towards physical activity. We can build a sustainable public health system by fostering illness prevention through healthy and active living.

For general background information and the 2006 Green Party of Canada platform, please visit www.greenparty.ca. You can also access media releases through the Newsroom, located on the left side of the Home page. The Media Releases section is the first item in the drop-down menu.

Bloc : Le Bloc Québécois estime que le principal problème, en matière d'information sur l'alimentation, est le sous-financement relié au déséquilibre fiscal qui prive le Québec et les provinces des revenus nécessaires pour remplir leurs responsabilités et, par le fait même, leur donne du fil à retordre pour soutenir correctement leurs organismes de prévention et de support. Le Bloc Québécois juge que la correction du déséquilibre fiscal permettra au Québec et aux provinces de développer davantage les services à leur population dans leurs champs de compétences et de s'assurer qu'en matière de santé, leurs citoyennes et citoyens bénéficient des outils adéquats pour faire face aux nouveaux défis de santé publique.

Liberal: In October 2005, this Liberal government announced an investment of \$300 million over five years, and \$74.4 million per year ongoing in funding under the Integrated Strategy on Healthy Living and Chronic Disease. The integrated approach to chronic diseases has been endorsed by the provincial and territorial governments of Canada in the First Minister's Health Agreement of September 2004.

Scientific evidence demonstrates, for example, that healthy eating and physical activity protect against many chronic diseases, including cancer, heart disease and stroke, and diabetes, so it makes sense to integrate certain health promotion efforts. Likewise, the major chronic diseases share several common risk factors, such as obesity.

In fact, the principles of integrated action mandate a balance between integrated and disease-specific efforts. That is exactly what the Integrated Strategy on Healthy Living and Chronic Disease will do - integrate efforts where appropriate and make disease-specific ones where necessary.

NDP: New Democrats have worked hard to label and ban trans-fats in food and have always called for restoring a national program that prevents illness by encouraging physical activity, and promoting proven alternative and traditional health practices to keep Canadians, especially Canadian children, healthy and out of the acute care system.

The NDP wants to modernize our infrastructure to make our communities stronger, safer, and more liveable. In that direction we'll immediately increase the Gas Tax Transfer to municipalities to the full 5 cents per litre as requested by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to be used in part for cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.