



CENTRE FOR
Science IN THE
Public Interest

The nonprofit publisher of
Nutrition Action Healthletter

CENTRE POUR
la science DANS
l'intérêt public

Éditeur sans but lucratif de
Nutrition Action Healthletter

Children's Advertising Initiative: Truth Sold Separately

OTTAWA (February 7, 2008) — Yesterday, 16 Canadian and US-based multinational food companies issued pledges concerning marketing directed at children. Bill Jeffery, National Coordinator of the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, made the following comment on the announcements:

“Increasingly, governments are fretting about the colossal human and economic burden of diet-related heart disease, diabetes, certain forms of cancer, and obesity. But, the tough-sounding commitments of the 16 food companies behind the Canadian Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative define `advertising to children` so narrowly even big spenders like Coca-Cola can claim to have *never* advertised to children, and industry giants Unilever and Cadbury can claim they only so-advertise one product each (Popsicles and Magic Elves, respectively). Likewise, companies' own lax, commercially-motivated definitions of `nutritious` allow, for instance, Kellogg to continue to flog Frosted Flakes and Froot Loops, and Kraft to sing the nutritional praises of Kool Aid and Kraft Dinner.

Nearly 29 years ago, the Quebec legislature banned ads for all products—including the likes of junk food and video games—targeting children under age 13 to protect them from being exploited. The Supreme Court of Canada later upheld the law saying `advertising directed at young children is, *per se*, manipulative. Such advertising aims to promote products by convincing those who will always believe.`

These 16 companies are selling a bill of goods to reporters, parents, and provincial and federal lawmakers to protect their access to children outside Quebec. Read the fine print. The companies `pledges` are willfully blind to most child-oriented advertising and shamefully self-serving about what passes for `nutritious.` Even if the toothless industry association, Advertising Standards Canada, could ruthlessly enforce these flimsy standards, they would only scratch the surface of the problem. According to the Institute of Medicine, US marketers spent \$15 billion, \$10 billion for food alone, targeting American children in 2004.

It is plainly time for legislatures to protect the other 75% of Canadian kids (living outside Quebec) from this unremitting manipulation and leave nutrition education to parents, teachers and health professionals.`

-- 30 --

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

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is an independent health advocacy organization with offices in Washington and Ottawa. CSPI's advocacy efforts are supported by more than 120,000 subscribers to the Canadian edition of its Nutrition Action Healthletter. CSPI does not accept industry or government funding and Nutrition Action does not carry advertisements.