



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01412**

BY: **MR. DAVIES (VANCOUVER KINGSWAY)**

DATE: **MAY 31, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **MR. JOËL LIGHTBOUND**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Labelling of food products

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

On October 24, 2016, the Minister of Health launched, A Vision for a Healthy Canada. The strategy is a holistic approach to health that incorporates healthy eating, healthy living and a healthy mind. The multi-year Healthy Eating Strategy will help to make healthier food choices the easier choice for all Canadians. The Government will use a variety of tools at its disposal - regulation, guidance and education - to create conditions to support healthy eating. For further information please consult the following url - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2016/10/vision-healthy-canada.html>

On December 14, 2016, as part of the Government's Healthy Eating Strategy, Health Canada finalized updates to the regulations for the Nutrition Facts table (NFt) and the List of Ingredients. As part of these updates, Health Canada has introduced two new labelling measures to help Canadians understand the sugars content in their food. First, Health Canada is requiring manufacturers to group sugars-based ingredients in the List of Ingredients between parentheses following the common name 'Sugars'. These include ingredients such as white and brown sugar, honey, molasses and syrups, and less familiar ingredients such as agave nectar and barley malt extract. This new measure, which is unique to Canadian food labels, will be a more transparent way of identifying sources of sugars added to food. Furthermore, because ingredients are listed in decreasing order of their weight, this new measure will allow Canadians to more easily identify how much sugars contribute to the total composition of the food compared to other ingredients.

Second, Health Canada is requiring the declaration of a percent Daily Value (% DV) for the amount of total sugars in the NfT based on 100 grams. This value is not a recommended level of intake, but rather the amount of total sugars that is consistent with a healthy eating pattern (i.e., a diet where sugars come mostly from fruit, vegetables and milk). To help consumers better use and understand the % DV, Health Canada is also requiring manufacturers to add a new footnote at the bottom of the NfT explaining that 5% or less of a given nutrient is a little and 15% or more is a lot.

Taken together, these labelling changes will help Canadians make more informed choices when it comes to the sugars content of their foods. When the sugars content in the NfT is at or above 15% DV, then the food is considered to contain a lot of sugars. When the term “sugars” appears among the first ingredients in the List of Ingredients, then most of the sugars declared in the NfT would be added sugars. These measures are also consistent with the intent of the World Health Organization’s recommendation on free sugars as foods that will be highlighted to consumers as containing “a lot” of total sugars (i.e., 15% DV or more) also tend to be foods that are high in free sugars.

In addition to those two new measures, Health Canada recently held public consultations on a new front-of-package (FOP) labelling approach for Canada. The proposed FOP approach uses an easily recognized symbol on the front of food packages that would quickly and simply highlight foods high in sugars, sodium and saturated fat. This proposed new measure would complement the information in the NfT and List of Ingredients. For example, through the use of symbols that are easy to see and understand, consumers would more easily identify foods that are high in sugars (as well as those high in sodium and saturated fat). Health Canada is currently considering the comments from the consultation and is preparing a regulatory proposal. The Department plans to consult with stakeholders and consumers on this regulatory proposal in fall 2017.

On June 10, 2017, Health Canada launched two public consultations: one on proposed revisions of Canada’s Food Guide to strengthen the Government’s recommendations about healthy food choices and eating behaviours; and, one on a proposed approach to restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children. Health Canada remains committed to openness, transparency and meaningful engagement with the public and stakeholders on the healthy eating initiatives. Altogether, these tools will help improve the food environment for Canadians to make the healthier food choice the easier choice.