

December 18th, 2014

Councillor Marvin Rotrand
Montreal City Council
Hôtel de ville
275 Rue Notre-Dame Est
Montréal, QC H2Y 1C6

Re: Support for motion calling on the Quebec National Assembly to implement a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages

Dear Councillor Rotrand,

As the Canadian Research Chair in Hypertension Prevention and Control, I am writing to express my strong support for your recent motion urging the Quebec National Assembly to implement a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages.

As the Canadian Hypertension Chair, I work with a committed coalition of health and scientific organizations to develop and advance action on a set of evidence-informed nutrition policy statements that target FPT governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. This includes a national consensus statement on [Food Pricing Policies to Promote Healthy Diets and Reduce NCD Risk](#), which to date has been supported by several national health organizations including, among others, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the College of Family Physicians of Canada and Hypertension Canada.

In Canada, diet is the leading risk factor for death and disability, a risk that is largely driven by our unhealthy eating environment which makes accessing healthy food to make healthy food choices difficult. Taxing sugar-sweetened beverages has evidence of effectiveness of improving dietary behaviors in childhood with the potential to prevent and control obesity and other diet-related diseases currently killing millions of Canadians.

Quebec has been a world leader in its legislation to restrict advertising to children under the age of 13. I very much encourage the Quebec National Assembly to continue to take a leadership role and pass your original motion to tax sugar-sweetened beverages. I further encourage the Government of Canada to follow Quebec's lead and implement comparable food and nutrition policies nationally.

The amended motion encouraging Canada to adopt US legislation, which relies on industry volunteerism to reduce calories in their products, is unlikely to improve Canada's food environment. Considerable evidence highlights that industry self-regulation and voluntary commitments do not work.

As a physician and health advocate, I want to congratulate you for prioritizing the health of Quebec residents and for putting this important policy issue on the political agenda. I strongly encourage you to continue to push for strong fiscal policies to improve diet.

Please let me know how I can continue to support you in your efforts to advance action on taxation of sugary beverages.

Regards,



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CC: Honourable Philippe Couillard, Premier of Quebec
Honourable Gaétan Barrette, Health and Social Services Minister of Quebec
Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada