

Groups and experts call for action on main driver of health care budgets: Unhealthy diets!

For immediate release

MONTREAL\CALGARY, January 15, 2016 -- Today, Food Secure Canada and Dr. Norman Campbell, HSF/CIHR Chair of Hypertension Prevention and Control, are releasing a joint [Food and Nutrition Fact Sheet](#) for policy-makers calling for action on the leading risk to Canadians' health and well-being – unhealthy diets. As Health Ministers from across the country prepare for their meeting in Vancouver on 20-21 January, alarm is increasing over the rising cost of fruits and vegetables. The Vancouver meeting is an extraordinary opportunity to tackle food as part of the recipe for a healthy Canada, and unhealthy diets need to be on the agenda (which is not yet public).

An [open letter to federal Health Minister Jane Philpott](#) was sent on January 13, 2016 to introduce the Food and Nutrition Fact Sheet and to request a meeting with Minister Philpott to discuss urgent action on the highest-priority items, including sodium/trans fat reduction and marketing to kids.

Among the alarming facts presented in the fact sheet:

- 60 per cent of the calories Canadians consume come from ultra-processed food.
- Health care consumes 35 per cent of provincial budgets and its costs are rising.
- Healthy, sustainable diets include more plant-based foods and less meat and processed foods. Rising prices for fresh fruits and vegetables will only exacerbate unhealthy eating trends and increase food insecurity.

“It’s time to connect the dots. Canadian health promotion practices currently focus on individual nutrition education, which is important but ineffective on its own. Government needs to urgently invest in programs and policies for health promotion that take a food systems approach to addressing unhealthy diets” said Diana Bronson, Executive Director of Food Secure Canada.

Food Secure Canada and Dr. Norman Campbell, Canada’s Chair in Hypertension Prevention and Control, have partnered to promote urgent action on the healthy food policies that would benefit most from federal leadership, inter-provincial cooperation and

cross-sectoral collaboration. “Canada has action plans such as the Sodium Reduction Strategy, developed by experts over many years, that are ready for implementation *today*,” says Dr. Campbell. “The missing ingredient has been political will, and we are very encouraged by this Federal-Provincial-Territorial meeting of Health Ministers.” :

Broad public and cross-sectoral support also exist for:

- Restricting the commercial marketing of all foods and beverages to children and youth age 16 years or under;
- Developing and implementing healthy food and beverage procurement policies in publicly funded and private sector settings. These institutions should procure more fresh food (locally grown wherever possible) and ensure that the food they serve is sustainable and promotes healthy eating;
- Regulating additions of sodium, free sugars, saturated fats and trans fatty acids in processed foods;
- Developing a National School Food program to ensure that all school children have healthy meals every day.

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For more information:

Food Secure Canada (a national network devoted to zero hunger, healthy and safe food and sustainable food systems):

Diana Bronson: 514 629 9236, diana@foodsecurecanada.org

Francois Zeller: 514 271 7352 or 438 401 1733

foodsecurecanada.org

@Food SecureCAN

Dr. Norman Campbell, C.M., HSF/CIHR Chair in Hypertension Prevention and Control:

Felicia Flowitt, Communications Director: 905-943-9400 x200,

felicia.flowitt@hypertension.ca

www.hypertensiontalk.com