Recommendation Extract

Restricting Marketing of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages to Children and Youth in Canada

Policy Goal:
Federal government to immediately begin a legislative process to restrict all marketing targeted to children under the age of 13 of foods and beverages high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars or sodium and that in the interim the food industry immediately ceases marketing of such food to children.

To date, there has been no substantive movement by the federal government to develop coordinated national-level policies that change the way unhealthy foods and beverages are produced, marketed and sold. Current federal, provincial and industry-led self-regulatory codes are inconsistent in their scope and remain ineffective in their ability to sufficiently reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing, nor have they been adequately updated to address the influx of new marketing mediums to which children and youth in Canada are increasingly subjected.

Action Recommendations
1. Federal Government Leadership
   1.1 Immediately and publicly operationalise the WHO set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children.
   1.2 Convene a Federal, Provincial and Territorial Working Group on Food and Beverage Marketing to Children to develop, implement and monitor policies to restrict unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children.
   1.3 In developing policies, it is recommended that the working group:
      ▪ Develop standardized criteria and an operational definition to distinguish and classify “unhealthy” foods and beverages.
      ▪ Develop a set if definitions/specifications that will guide policy scope and implementation.
      ▪ Set measurable outcomes, targets and timelines for achievement of targets for industry and broadcasters to restrict unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children in all forms and settings.
      ▪ Establish mechanisms for close monitoring and enforcement through defined rewards and/or penalties by an independent regulatory agency that has the power and infrastructure to evaluate questionable advertisements and enforce penalties for non-compliance.
      ▪ Develop evaluation mechanisms to assess process, impact and outcomes of food and beverage marketing restriction policies.
1.4 Provide adequate funding to support the successful implementation and monitoring of food and beverage marketing restriction policies.
1.5 Collaborate with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and other granting councils to fund research to generate baseline data and address gaps related to the impact of marketing in all media on children and how to most effectively restrict advertising unhealthy foods and beverages to children.
1.6 Fund and commission a Canadian economic modelling study to assess the cost-effectiveness and the relative strength of the effect of marketing in comparison to other influences on children’s diets and diet-related health outcomes.
1.7 Call on industry to immediately stop marketing foods and beverages to children that are high in fats, sugar or sodium.

2. Provincial, Territorial and Municipal Governments
   2.1 Incorporate strategies to reduce the impact of unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children into provincial and local (public) health or related strategic action plans, and consider all settings that are frequented by children.
   2.2 Pass and/or amend policies and legislation restricting unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children that go beyond limitations stipulated in federal legislation and regulations and industry voluntary codes.
   2.3 Until federal legislation is in place, strike a P/T Steering Committee on Unhealthy Food and Beverage Marketing to Children to establish interprovincial consistency related to key definitions and criteria and mechanisms for enforcement.
   2.4 Collaborate with local health authorities, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders to develop and implement education and awareness programmes on the harmful impacts of marketing, including but not limited to unhealthy food and beverage advertising.
   2.5 Call on industry to immediately stop marketing foods and beverages to children that are high in fats, sugar or sodium.

3. Non-government Organisations (NGOs), Health Care Organisations, Health Care Professionals
   3.1 Publicly endorse this position statement and advocate to all Canadian Governments to restrict marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and youth in Canada.
   3.2 Collaborate with governments at all levels to facilitate implementation and enforcement of federal/provincial/municipal regulations or policies.
   3.3 Wherever possible, incorporate and address the need for restrictions on unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children into position papers, strategic plans, conferences, programmes and other communication mediums.
   3.4 Support, fund and/or commission research to address identified research gaps, including the changing contexts and modes of marketing and their implications on the nutritional status, health and well-being of children and youth.
   3.5 Call on industry to immediately stop the marketing of foods and beverages high in fat, sugar or sodium.
4. **Marketing and Commercial Industry**
   4.1 Immediately cease the marketing of foods and beverages high in fats, sugar or sodium.
   4.2 Amend the Canadian Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CAI) nutrition criteria used to re-define “better-for-you products” to be consistent with currently available international standards that are healthier and with Canadian nutrient profiling standards, once developed.