



April 08, 2024

Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs,  
Science and Technology  
The Senate of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4

Via email: [soci@sen.parl.gc.ca](mailto:soci@sen.parl.gc.ca)

**Re: Bill C-252**

We are writing to express our concerns with Bill C-252: *An Act to Amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibition of food and beverage marketing directed at children)*. The Bill, in its current, overly broad form and with its unsubstantiated recitals, risks unintended consequences, including the capture of perfectly legitimate marketing directed at adults.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, as Canada's largest business association, representing over 200,000 businesses in communities across the country, shares the widespread concern with increasing rates of child obesity. Being physically healthy is key to enjoying a good quality of life, and research has shown that healthy living habits practiced in childhood often carry over into adulthood. Therefore, it is a matter of common sense that the government, where possible, should take steps to encourage the uptake of healthy living habits among our children, including by shielding them from advertising for unhealthy food and beverage. Industry is supportive of such efforts.

Our concern with Bill C-252 is that it is largely a solution in search of a problem. In 2021, industry launched the Code for the Responsible Advertising of Food and Beverage Products to Children— which ensures that food products are advertised responsibly. This includes specific directives to restrict directly advertising of food and beverages that contain beyond a certain threshold of sugars, saturated fats, or sodium to children under the age of 13. Four years in the making, this Code Applies to all advertising in all media and is administered by Ad Standards Canada.

Instead of simply adopting an effective solution developed by industry, the government is choosing to pursue an approach that is likely to cause harm, with no discernable benefit. A chief concern is that the vagueness of C-252 and a new set of regulations could inadvertently target advertising directed at adults. This bill is a shell, leaving all discretionary powers to a few unelected officials to prescribe the regulatory regime. It will also compound the effects of recent and poorly coordinated changes to food labelling and packaging requirements from Health Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada. A complicated and poorly calibrated new set of regulations would drive away investment from Canada's food industry, hurt competition, and raise costs for consumers. With food inflation still high, this outcome would obviously not serve the interests of Canadians.

Appropriate safeguards around advertising are important. In this case, a solution has been found by the industry to achieve the government's goals. We must also remember the valuable role of the advertising industry in Canada's economy. Canada's ad expenditure is expected to amount to upwards of \$20 billion this year, contributing to hundreds of thousands of jobs in Canada. The government should therefore also consider the implications for the advertising sector, which provides a valuable service to businesses and consumers alike.

We urge the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to give this potentially damaging bill the careful study and consideration it needs. We hope that the government will recognize the effective work of industry to self-regulate and avoid passing this unnecessary law and introducing further potentially damaging regulations.



Sincerely,

Liam MacDonald

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