APCCP
Alberta Policy Coalition for Cancer Prevention

December 17, 2010

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq,
Minister of Health
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

Re: Government of Canada *Kid's Health & Safety* Campaign

Dear Hon. Leona Aglukkaq,

In response to the recently launched the *Kid's Health & Safety* Campaign (www.healthycanadians.gc.ca) the Alberta Policy Coalition for Cancer Prevention (APCCP) wishes to commend the Government of Canada for addressing the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) within the campaign. The inclusion of SSB messaging within the Government of Canada campaign is a significant and appropriate first step forward in addressing risk factors for childhood obesity in Canada.

Although the causes of obesity and being overweight are complex, it is clear dietary intake and food choices play an important role (1). Sugar sweetened beverages (SSB) are unique products as they provide significant calories but virtually no nutrients and are a key dietary factor leading to the increase in obesity and overweight. Evidence supporting this relationship in both children and adults has been mounting over the last few years with several studies demonstrating a link between body weight, risk for chronic disease and the intake of SSB (2-6).

Canadians want action to address the consumption of SSB. Two recent APCCP surveys of Alberta decision-makers (Government, schools, workplaces and the media) and the general public found 80% of responding decision-makers and 82% of respondents from the public would support restricting SSB and other unhealthy foods from vending machines in schools and all public buildings as an intervention to address obesity (7, 8). In view of the childhood obesity epidemic and the significant public support for action, it is critically important that the Government of Canada focus attention on the impact of SSB on risk for obesity and chronic disease in Canada.

The Alberta Policy Coalition for Cancer Prevention (APCCP) represents a broad range of practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and community organizations who have come together to coordinate efforts, generate evidence, and advocate for policy change in order to reduce cancer and other chronic diseases in Alberta. Our organizational members include the Canadian Cancer Society AB/NWT Division, the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Alberta, NWT and Nunavut, the Alberta Centre for Active Living, Ever Active Schools, Action on Smoking & Health (ASH), the Alberta Cancer Foundation, Promoting Optimal Weights through Ecological Research (POWER) and québécoise sur la problématique du poids (Quebec Coalition on Weight Related Problems).

The APCCP would welcome the opportunity to further discuss our policy interests related to SSB and other unhealthy foods and beverages with your officials in Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada to identify how we can support the Government of Canada in using public policy to address these significant public health issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Kim Raine
Co-Director
Alberta Policy Coalition for Cancer Prevention (APCCP)

Cc. The Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Ms. Glenda Yeates, Deputy Minister, Health Canada
Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer, Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

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