

Ottawa Journal, by David Tilson MP ? Government proposes changes to nutrition information on food labels

We can all agree that healthy eating is an important factor in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a healthy weight, as well as reducing the risk for chronic diseases.

Part of making healthy food choices is reading the labels on the food we buy.

Earlier this year, our government asked Canadian parents and consumers to tell us about the challenges and concerns they experience when using the nutrition information on food labels. We are now proposing changes to the nutrition information that is provided on food labels and asking Canadian parents, consumers, and stakeholders for feedback on these changes through a series of in person and online consultations.

The consultations, which were launched by Health Minister Rona Ambrose July 14, propose changes to the format of the Nutrition Facts table and the list of ingredients; updates to the list of nutrients that must appear in the table; and to the Daily Values. It also includes changes to how ingredients are listed. For example, all sugar ingredients would be grouped together, to ensure when picking out a children's cereal, parents can make informed decisions. Finally, another key proposal is to provide guidelines to industry to make the serving sizes displayed in the Nutrition Facts table more consistent among similar products.

The proposed changes aim to provide Canadian parents and consumers with the nutrition information they need to make informed decisions about the foods they purchase and prepare for themselves and their families.

These consultations are part of a broader commitment made by the government during the 2013 Speech from the Throne, to consult with Canadians on how to improve the way nutritional information is presented on food labels. In addition, the consultations will be posted online for a 60-day period (July 14 to Sept. 11). The feedback received from Canadian parents, consumers and stakeholders will help inform any decisions about label changes.

Canada is a world leader in the field of nutrition labeling and was one of the first countries to require mandatory nutrition labeling on pre-packaged foods. These consultations build on our government's efforts to raise awareness about healthy eating and adopt policies that protect the health of Canadians.

Our government is interested in knowing how Canadians feel about the proposed changes to food labels and if these proposed changes will help with the use of food labels in making healthy choices. I encourage all Canadians to visit Health Canada's website, at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/consultation/index-eng.php, to participate in the consultations. We look forward to hearing from Canadian parents, consumers, and stakeholders in the months ahead.

