



Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada

2015-2016 pre-budget consultation submission to the Standing Committee on Finance

July 31, 2015

The Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada (CDPAC) is pleased to submit this brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance as part of the 2016 pre-budget consultation. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with the Committee to discuss our recommendations and present specific ways to enact them.

CDPAC (cdpac.ca) is an alliance of eleven national organizations sharing a common vision for an integrated system of research, surveillance, policies, and programs for maintaining health and preventing chronic disease in Canada.

The causes of chronic diseases are complex and require a comprehensive approach. In 2011, the UN General Assembly unanimously endorsed the Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases - mainly cardiovascular diseases, some cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. These non-communicable diseases (NCDs), also commonly referred to as 'chronic diseases' are largely preventable and are predominantly caused by a common set of avoidable risk factors, most notably: tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke; unhealthy diet; insufficient physical activity; unhealthy weights; and, harmful use of alcohol.

In Canada, three out of five people over the age of twenty live with one of these preventable diseases, and four out of five are at risk. Every year, over 150,000 Canadians die from them. Together, these preventable diseases account for 65% of all deaths in Canada.

While Canada has made some progress in the area of tobacco control over recent decades, there has been an increase in unhealthy weights. According to recent data, approximately 60% of adults and 32% of children and youth are overweight or obese.

Evidence shows that upstream prevention of unhealthy weights in children and youth will lead to a significant reduction in the rates of adulthood overweight and obesity. According to the OECD, unhealthy weights "foreshadow increases in the occurrence of health problems (such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and some cancers) and higher health care costs in the future."¹ It is well understood that early childhood development is a critical determinant of health. CDPAC acknowledges the ongoing role the Government of Canada is playing, in partnership with the provinces and territories to develop and deliver comprehensive, culturally

appropriate early intervention and prevention programs that promote the health and social development of vulnerable children in communities across Canada (notably, via the *Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program* and *Community Action Program for Children*). But much more should be done.

The Government of Canada has committed to a number of specific objectives outlined in the Public Health Agency of Canada's *Preventing Chronic Disease Strategic Plan 2013-2016* which support the accomplishment of goals outlined in the *Integrated Strategy on Healthy Living and Chronic Disease*. Continued and increased financial commitments are needed to escalate the pace of progress.

Recommendations:

CDPAC urges the Government of Canada to strengthen its commitment to the support of healthy living through these three budget priorities:

1. A significant increase in federal government investment in the promotion of healthy living for chronic disease prevention

There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating significant economic and social returns on investment for healthy living policies and programming. Leading edge work by Hans Krueger at the University of British Columbiaⁱ, for example, provides excellent data and modeling resources for an evidence-informed approach to investment decisions for chronic disease prevention.

The federal government should increase its investment in healthy living, with an emphasis on scale-up of evidence informed policies and programs, in collaboration with provinces, territories and municipal governments.

2. Taxation: Establish a tax on Sugary Drinks

There is a strong body of evidence linking sugar to obesity and other adverse health outcomes. Sugary drinks are the largest source of sugar in our diet, carrying a lot of energy but little or no nutritional value. Marketing by the beverage and fast food industries has normalized consumption of sugary drinks on a daily basis. Sugary drinks are now known to be a leading driver of obesity

An economic intervention by government, such as a manufacturer's levy on sugary drinks could generate revenues to help fund counter-measures such as healthy-living education campaigns. Recent results from jurisdictions such as Mexicoⁱⁱ show that price-related disincentives do have a significant impact on consumption.

ⁱ Krueger H, J Krueger, J Koot. "Variation across Canada in the Economic Burden Attributable to Excess Weight, Tobacco Smoking and Physical Inactivity", *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. 106(4), e171-7, 2015.

ⁱⁱ Alianza por la salud alimentaria. (2015). Mexico's National Institute of Public Health study indicates the federal sugar-sweetened beverage tax is successfully reducing purchases in Mexican households - Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria. Retrieved September 20, 2015, from <http://alianzasalud.org.mx/2015/06/mexicos-national-institute-of-public-health-study-indicates-the-federal-sugar-sweetened-beverage-tax-is-successfully-reducing-purchases-in-mexican-households/>

3. Infrastructure and Communities: Promote physical activity through greater investment in active transportation

As well as being fundamental to our economy, transportation is an important determinant of health. Transportation systems and planning have an enormous impact on the shape, form and air quality of communities as well as citizens' travel choices, safety and social connectivity. At the individual level, transportation choices impact on one's ability to access health promoting services including essentials such as grocery stores, schools, recreation facilities, health care, employment and social supports.

The federal government, in collaboration with provincial, territorial and municipal governments should invest in active transportation systems to help Canadians be a physically active as possible.

CDPAC will be meeting with parliamentarians to further discuss our recommendations for federal investments in healthy living for chronic disease prevention. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with government and opposition members of the committee to discuss specific ways for enacting our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig Larsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Craig Larsen
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The Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada (CDPAC) is a network of 11 national organizations that have come together around the common cause of chronic disease prevention.

Mission

“Working primarily at the national level, CDPAC’s mission is to take an integrated, population health approach to influence policies and practices that will help prevent chronic disease. CDPAC has two inter-related functions – advocacy and mobilizing knowledge for action”.

Vision

“Canadians will be supported by a comprehensive, sufficiently resourced, sustainable, and integrated system of research, surveillance, policies, and programs that promote health and prevent chronic disease.”

Alliance Members

Alliance representatives provide strategic direction and oversight to CDPAC’s shared priorities for action on chronic disease prevention. The Chair of the Alliance is Ms. Mary Collins, BC Healthy Living Alliance. The past Chair is Ms. Ida Thomas, YMCA Canada. The Alliance Members are:

- The Arthritis Society
- BC Healthy Living Alliance*
- Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health
- Canadian Cancer Society
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Canadian Medical Association
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Dietitians of Canada
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
- The Kidney Foundation of Canada
- Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance*
- YMCA Canada

*Representatives of the CDPAC Network of Provincial/Territorial Alliances.