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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 8 April 2008

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 8 avril 2008

**Standing committee on
social policy**

Healthy Food for Healthy
Schools Act, 2008

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2008 portant
sur une alimentation saine
pour des écoles saines

Chair: Shafiq Qadri
Clerk: Katch Koch

Président : Shafiq Qadri
Greffier : Katch Koch

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL POLICYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

Tuesday 8 April 2008

Mardi 8 avril 2008

The committee met at 1551 in committee room 1.

Le Président (M. Shafiq Qadri): Chers collègues, j'ai le plaisir maintenant de vous accueillir au Comité permanent de la politique sociale pour considérer le projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

Colleagues and ladies and gentlemen, it's my privilege to welcome you and to begin the official proceedings of the standing committee on social policy for consideration of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act.

As a matter of procedure, I will invite a member of the subcommittee to please read into the record the subcommittee report.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Your subcommittee met on Wednesday, March 26, 2008, to consider the method of proceeding on Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act, and recommends the following—and I would move adoption of the following:

(1) That the committee meet for the purpose of holding public hearings in Toronto on Tuesday, April 8, 2008.

(2) That the clerk of the committee, with the authority of the Chair, prepare and implement an advertisement strategy for the major daily newspapers and post the information regarding the hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel and the Legislative Assembly website.

(3) That interested people who wish to be considered to make an oral presentation on the bill should contact the clerk of the committee by Monday, April 7, 2008, at 5 p.m.

(4) That the presenters be offered 15 minutes in which to make a statement and answer questions.

(5) That the clerk of the committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized to schedule witnesses on a first-come first-served basis.

(6) That the deadline for written submissions be Tuesday, April 8, 2008, at 5 p.m.

(7) That amendments to the bill be filed with the clerk of the committee by Thursday, April 10, 2008, at 5 p.m.

(8) That the committee meet on Monday, April 14, 2008, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

(9) That the research officer provide the following:

—background information on similar types of legislation in other jurisdictions; and

—a summary of presentations, by Thursday, April 10, 2008.

(10) That the clerk of the committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized prior to the adoption of the report of the subcommittee to commence making any preliminary arrangements to facilitate the committee's proceedings.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): If there's any discussion, the floor is open for such as of now. Any discussion on the subcommittee report? If not, those in favour of adopting the subcommittee report as read? Any opposed? Adopted.

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY
SCHOOLS ACT, 2008LOI DE 2008 PORTANT
SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINE
POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Consideration of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

CENTRE FOR SCIENCE
IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): We will now move to the actual testimony from various presenters. I'd like to first of all thank you on behalf of the committee and, of course, all members of the Legislature, for your active participation and contribution to the legislative framework and to the political record.

First of all, just to announce the rules which hopefully will be strictly and forcefully followed: simply to say, 15 minutes per presenter, and if there's more than one individual, we'll distribute it internally there. If there is any time left over for questions within that same 15 minutes, that will be distributed very evenly amongst all three parties here.

Our first presenter—I'll remind him he has 15 minutes in which to present—is, by conference call, Mr. Bill Jeffery, national coordinator for the Centre for Science in the Public Interest. Mr. Jeffery, I invite you to begin. Perhaps you might just let us know where you are.

Mr. Bill Jeffery: I'm calling from Washington, DC. I'm at a conference here in Washington related to the Trans Atlantic Consumer Dialogue.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Wonderful. Please begin.

Mr. Bill Jeffery: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the invitation to appear before the committee.

First, I'll tell you a bit about our organization. The Centre for Science in the Public Interest is a non-profit health advocacy organization specializing in nutrition issues, with offices in Ottawa and in Washington, DC.

Our Ottawa health advocacy is funded by 135,000 subscribers now, 65,000 of which are Ontarians, to the Canadian edition of our monthly Nutrition Action Healthletter.

CSPI does not accept funding from industry or government, and Nutrition Action does not carry advertisements.

As you know, diet-related disease is a huge public health problem in Canada. Last year, the House of Commons standing committee on health even lamented that rising childhood obesity rates may cause this generation of children to have shorter, sicker lives than their parents. The typical Canadian diet contains too many foods rich in calories, saturated fat, trans fat, salt and added sugars, and too low in fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains. Every year, diet-related cases of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain forms of cancer prematurely end the lives of tens of thousands of Canadians and rob the Canadian economy of \$6.6 billion, according to Health Canada, due to health care costs and lost productivity.

Our report, *Are Schools Making the Grade? School Nutrition Policies Across Canada*, was released in Ottawa in October 2007. In it, we measured existing provincial school nutrition standards against benchmarks issued in April 2007 by the US Institute of Medicine, in conjunction with Canadian experts, in the Institute of Medicine's report, *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools*. The conclusion of our report was that many Canadian governments have weak nutrition standards, including Ontario. So we're pleased to see this development with Bill 8.

Furthermore, Canada is one of only a very few OECD countries without a national, publicly subsidized school meal program. In 2007, the US federal government spent about US\$11 billion subsidizing school meals, while Canadian provincial governments spent, collectively, less than C\$30 million. Put another way, Ontario's investment in school foods was approximately two cents per day per student. It's recently doubled, so now four cents per day per student. That compares, as you can see, very unfavourably to about \$1 a day per student in the United States.

We don't have solid, up-to-date evidence of what's actually being sold in schools in Canada since most provinces established those school nutrition standards, and every province has at least some form of it now. If provincial governments know, they aren't telling, but in 2006, the *Globe and Mail* newspaper conducted its own survey of 139 school boards across Canada. It concluded that most Canadian schools are still—in the *Globe and Mail's* words—"nutritional wastelands." In our assessment of provincial nutrition criteria, Ontario fared poorly,

like most provinces. It was one of three provinces to which we assigned an F grade, largely for setting weak limits on fats, sodium, calories and sugars, but also for applying only to foods sold through vending machines and meals provided by community volunteers.

Minister Wynne's Bill 8 is a very encouraging sign. In fact, to the best of our knowledge, it would be the first truly binding school nutrition standards, provided the standards are strong and compliance is monitored.

Sound nutrition standards are extremely important, to be sure, but for cash-strapped schools, selling junk food has an obvious appeal: low costs and a captive market of willing, undiscerning consumers. Presently, there is no pan-Canadian, publicly subsidized school meal program, and provincially funded programs, as I indicated, are small and piecemeal. All provincial governments, except Alberta, pony up some cash. The non-profit Breakfast for Learning Alberta charity helps fund some programs, but their combined annual investment was just \$5.95 per student in the 2005-06 school year. In British Columbia, that level of funding is now up to \$23 per student, and they have plans for a massive increase. So the British Columbia government, at least in this regard, is a bright light, and I would encourage the Ontario government to follow suit in that respect.

I want to give some specific clause-by-clause recommendations, if I can, about Bill 8. First, I should say that I read the transcripts of the debate from December, and I was generally very encouraged that it seemed all parties were prepared to support this bill. Some members advocated doing more, and I'd certainly like to encourage that.

In particular, I was encouraged to see what looked like a nascent accord on December 11 between MPP Rosario Marchese and Minister Wynne to put an explicit ban on synthetic trans fat directly into Bill 8. I hope the parties are able to agree to such language and insert a coming-into-force date directly into the text of Bill 8. In my written comments, I've proposed a drafting technique for doing that.

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In the spirit of co-operation, I hope that both sides of the Legislature will take some opportunities to take other important policy measures that could improve the health of Ontarians, especially children by:

- limiting the use of synthetic trans fat from restaurants, as the province of British Columbia and the Calgary Health Region recently promised to do, and as MPP John O'Toole mentioned with approval in the Legislature last December;

- ensuring children enjoy legal protection designed to shield adults from misleading advertising by protecting impressionable children by banning all advertisement to children under age 13, as Quebec did 28 years ago;

- aligning federal and provincial sales tax rules for foods sold in restaurants and grocery stores with government nutrition advice, by way of example, to consistently tax doughnuts instead of vegetables and lard instead of club soda, just two trivial examples;

—requiring basic nutrition information disclosures on large chain restaurant menus, as Seattle and New York City are now requiring;

—as I mentioned earlier, making a real financial investment in school foods, closer to \$1 a day than four cents a day, and pressing the federal and local governments to pitch in to subsidize healthy food for students.

I'd like to make a few more specific comments on the bill. First of all, on paragraph 29.3 of subsection 8(1), the minister's nutrition standard should be founded on science-based standards, we believe, specified by the Institute of Medicine report. This highly respected body sets nutrition standards used as the basis for Canada's Food Guide and the federally mandated nutrition facts labels for pre-packaged foods. I hope the Ministry of Education, perhaps in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, will initiate the consultations in such a way as to ensure that they can hit the ground running in efforts to enshrine nutrition standards and regulations when Bill 8 becomes law, rather than just waiting until Bill 8 becomes law and then initiating the consultation.

Furthermore, we encourage the Minister of Education to consider leading, with the provinces and federal government, the development of national school nutrition standards, based on the Institute of Medicine report and on the revised Canada's Food Guide to the extent that it is useful and in accord with contemporary nutrition science.

In addition to this, I noted that in Bill 8 there was some ambiguity about whether the nutrition standards would end up in the form of regulations or policies. You can see the difference in subsection 318(1) and section 319. We believe that nutrition standards should be promulgated in authoritative legally binding texts that are amenable to periodic updates, commensurate with scientific and public health developments.

With regard to special event days referred to in section 317, the scope and application of the yet-to-be-defined notion of special event days could leave open a loophole in nutrition standards that is vulnerable to abuse. The extent of this problem could be limited by taking one of three drafting measures. I'll just leave you to examine those three choices that I've put into the written comments, but suffice it to say this should be narrowed so that it is truly the exception and not the rule.

Then lastly, there should be some clarity in the bill regarding the supremacy of provincial nutrition standards in relation to catering contracts. There is some language in the bill that makes it unclear whether proposed clauses 320(f) and (g) mean that the regulations would trump the terms of the catering contracts or vice versa. We believe that the regulatory nutrition standards should prevail, of course, especially to ensure that vendors cannot escape the requirements of the regulation by providing schools with incentives to sign long-term contracts.

I would just say in conclusion that I would like to underscore how very important this precedent-setting bill can be for protecting and advancing the nutritional well-

being of Ontario children and for helping to foster healthy dietary patterns that could persist into adulthood.

I urge the committee to ensure that the minister's nutrition standards are sound, that school food services practices are monitored, and that the Ontario and British Columbia governments continue to show leadership in expanding the pool of financial resources that can be devoted by all three levels of government to subsidizing truly healthy fare.

We all have a responsibility and, frankly, a self-interest in ensuring that future generations of children are at least as healthy as their parents, but we can, and should, set our sights even higher. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Jeffery. We'll have about a minute or so from two parties by request, starting with the Conservative side, if there be any takers.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'll ask one question. Mr. Jeffery, this is a bill that stands in isolation and deals specifically with trans fats. It was presented following the government's announcement in the throne speech that they would be dealing with an overall diabetes strategy. So, in and of itself, the bill is one aspect and there's nothing anybody can really disagree with, and your testimony seems to substantiate that. Would you have preferred to see something more wide-ranging?

Mr. Bill Jeffery: I've read the bill very closely and I've heard this allegation that it's just about trans fat. Perhaps I completely misread the bill, but it seems to me that it's enabling the minister to set regulations specifying nutrition standards for all school foods.

I take your point that the minister may not exercise that power. I hope the minister does exercise that power. But certainly the bill, to my mind anyway, is much broader than just trans fat.

But to directly answer your question, certainly getting trans fat out of the school system certainly would not be sufficient by itself. There have to be good nutrition standards, some kind of enforcement mechanism, and then better funding for school foods.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We'll move to the government side, by request.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, just to say thank you, Mr. Jeffery, for interrupting your meetings down in Washington to speak to us, and to confirm as well that your reading of the bill is correct, that it does allow the minister to set a general nutrition guideline for food in school, and that the minister absolutely intends to do that. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Jeffery, for your time, your submission and the written materials.

Mr. Bill Jeffery: My pleasure.

HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite before the committee Mr. Rocco Rossi, the chief executive officer of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario.

Mr. Rossi, as you take your position there, I would perhaps also just like once again, on behalf of the committee, to first of all thank you formally not only for your presence today, but also for the extraordinary work that the Heart and Stroke Foundation does for all Ontarians, and indeed all Canadians.

Mr. Rocco Rossi: Merci, monsieur le Président. Je suis très content d'être ici parmi vous aujourd'hui.

I want to begin by expressing my appreciation and that of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario for the opportunity to provide input on this important legislation. We're always pleased to offer our advice and input to the government, particularly when we see the government moving in the right direction. So it's a particular pleasure to be here today in support of Bill 8.

Before I offer the foundation's comment on this legislation, I would like to take a minute to introduce ourselves for those committee members not familiar with us.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario is a community-based, non-profit organization with over 40,000 volunteers, 300 staff and almost 30 offices spread from Chatham to Cornwall to Timmins. Our mission is to reduce the risk of premature death and disability from heart disease and stroke through research, advocacy, and public and professional education. We are part of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, a national federation that shares these goals.

This year alone, we will invest almost \$85 million in research, education, prevention and advocacy in the province of Ontario.

I have to say that with the recent death of Charlton Heston, I was reminded of the 10 commandments. In actual fact, there were 11 commandments, but while God felt it necessary to remind children to honour their parents, the Almighty didn't think it necessary to remind parents, "Thou shalt protect thy children before thyself." It's hard-wired into every parent's being, and for millennia we have largely honoured that commandment. Sadly, we are at serious risk of breaching it on a societal basis.

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While people may think of heart attacks and strokes as health issues for the elderly or at least the middle-aged, the roots of these conditions can often be traced back to childhood. Canada's young people have never been more obese and therefore never more at risk than they are today. The rate of increase is simply breathtaking. Twenty years ago, childhood obesity was a relatively rare phenomenon: Only 3% of Canadian children and youth were obese. Type 2 diabetes was something in a textbook, but not a reality. By 2004, that figure had climbed to 8%, or some half million of our young people.

Today, here in Ontario, 28% of children and youth are either overweight or obese—in just a few years. That is an absolutely staggering and dangerous number. The situation is having an enormous impact on the health of our young people because of diabetes and other problems caused or exacerbated by excess weight.

What happens to the carriers of that excess weight a few years from now will be worse still. Between the ages of six and 12, children are learning to make decisions and beginning to make more choices on their own. They are developing eating and physical activity habits and attitudes that will carry with them for the rest of their lives. If they bring those extra kilograms and bad habits with them into adulthood, they are prime candidates for heart attack and stroke.

We can and must do something to help reverse this trend. Steps taken to reintroduce mandatory physical activity in our elementary schools and now legislation like Bill 8 are a place to start.

I would also like to commend Mr. Marchese for introducing a private member's bill to raise the important debate about food advertising to children. The proposed amendments to the Education Act outlined in Bill 8 provide an important opportunity to establish strong policies and guidelines for nutritional standards in schools well beyond the issue of trans fats.

Schools are an ideal setting to establish and promote healthy eating among children and youth. They are surrounded by peers and educators in an environment designed to help educate and guide them. The school environment influences healthy eating habits in many ways: through the foods that are available, nutrition policies, school nutrition and health curricula, and teacher and peer modelling.

These actions have been shown to work. Promoting healthy food choices and habits in schools has been shown in other jurisdictions to have a moderate to high impact on children's eating practices.

Unfortunately, healthy choices are often not available in schools. Trans fats in particular are not a choice; they're a killer. They are unsafe in virtually any quantity. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario estimates that consumption of trans fats could account for 3,000 to 5,000 Canadian deaths annually from heart disease. That's why the restricting of industrially produced trans fats in our schools is such an important first step, and I want to emphasize "first step," because as much as the foundation supports this legislation, we see it as just the beginning of what can and should be done. We see an opportunity for a broader impact. You can extend the trans fat ban beyond the boundaries of the school to a provincial trans fat strategy similar to what has been done in British Columbia. It should encompass restaurants, recreational facilities and other environments where children have access to food.

Who knows? You might even set an example by banning trans fats from the Queen's Park cafeteria, truly cutting the fat from government, one might say.

But our suggested strategy goes well beyond these restrictions. You can't solve this problem by only limiting the places where trans fat is sold. We must also educate young people to recognize and avoid these substances all of their lives.

We know that when people are informed, they are more likely to make healthy choices. So information

about the nutritional value of foods and the health effects of lowering trans fats should also be made available to students. It should be provided through nutrition education at school and through public education programs.

Why not expand the use of the Eat Smart program in schools and adopt nutrition information programs such as Health Check? These programs have clear nutritional criteria and guidelines which could serve to expedite the process of setting standards within schools.

Why not build upon current successes, such as the student nutrition program and the northern fruit and vegetable pilot? These programs help ensure that all children have access to healthy foods.

You've clearly recognized the problem and, to your credit, want to take effective action. So why wait? Why reinvent the wheel? You have effective tools at your disposal today.

The current legislation, as has been noted, could be strengthened by requiring schools to adopt nutritional thresholds and standards for more than just trans fats. Other nutrients, including fat, sugar and salt, as set out in Canada's Food Guide, should, can and hopefully will be included. Then you would truly be tackling the root causes of obesity and the future bad health of our young Ontarians. The potential for savings in both lives and health care dollars is incalculable.

For now, we urge the government to move forward with passing and implementing Bill 8. We're pleased to see the ministry has already started the process to adopt nutritional standards within schools, as set out in the act. We'd like to see the government take the next step and begin the consultative process of setting guidelines immediately beyond the trans fat file.

To those who say government has no place in our cafeterias, or that this is an example of overprotection of our children, let me say this: If we fail to reverse the trend towards increased childhood obesity, if we fail to encourage physical activity, if we fail to provide good nutrition where we can and encourage it in every other place, if we fail to educate, protect and guide our children, we will truly have the first generation in history—absent war and pestilence—that does not live longer and healthier lives than its parents. Truly, we would be guilty of breaking that unspoken 11th commandment. That's the real danger to our children and our society.

So I ask those critics of Bill 8 if they're willing to take that risk or if, instead, we should be doing everything possible to give our children longer, healthier lives. This legislation is a helpful and necessary tool to help Ontario's youth make healthy choices today and learn healthy habits for a lifetime.

We endorse it and congratulate the government on taking positive action on this important issue. I'm happy to take any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Rossi. We have about two minutes per side, beginning with Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to see you, Rocco. It really is hard to oppose the bill. I suspect that everyone

here supports it. The question is how we make it stronger, because as I said even when we debated the bill, as you look at the explanatory note, it simply says, "add provisions regulating" trans fats. It doesn't say "ban." The media thinks we're banning trans fats, as the media felt three years ago—when Mr. Kennedy was here—that we banned junk food. We didn't do anything of the kind. It's all very nice. The problem is that if it takes another three years to do another nice little thing, then the problems that you were describing are going to be serious and get worse. So how do we convince them?

Mr. Rocco Rossi: The devil is always in the detail of the actual regulation. We're encouraged, but hopefully we'll see that actually spelled out in the guidelines that follow and hopefully go beyond trans fat, as has been suggested and as was noted by the member.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to try to introduce some amendments to make this stronger. I'm assuming people like you would support any amendment that makes this bill stronger; is that correct?

Mr. Rocco Rossi: Along the lines of the logic that we've spelled out?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Absolutely.

Mr. Rocco Rossi: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I now invite the member from the government. I remind you that you have about two minutes.

Mr. Dave Levac: Rocco, hi. It's good to see you again, as always. I asked for some time to do two things: number one, to thank you for your support and appreciate the science behind your proposal, because I understand you do an awful lot of research in the Heart and Stroke Foundation that is also the basis of some of the comments you're making today. So if you can confirm that, I think that's a fact.

Mr. Rocco Rossi: Absolutely a fact. The key thing about trans fats versus even saturated fats, which are a bad thing, is that trans fats have the double whammy of both reducing the so-called good cholesterol, the HDL cholesterol, and increasing bad cholesterol, so it literally puts heart disease on steroids.

Mr. Dave Levac: Okay. Second of all, I want to let you know that your program for defibs has worked. There was a life saved in my riding just a while ago because of the defibs, in which the Heart and Stroke Foundation has been a partner with the government and the municipalities. So I want to offer a true testimony and our congratulations for being there when we needed it.

Mr. Rocco Rossi: Thank you, and again I'd congratulate the government on the program. In the last 90 days alone, seven people have been saved in different communities across Ontario with defibs and CPR training that we've provided through the program.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): To the Conservative side.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you for appearing before us today. I also echo our appreciation for what the Heart and Stroke Foundation does, not only in the province, but in

all our communities. It is great that you spend a lot of money. I see the \$85 million in research, education, prevention and advocacy.

This bill is certainly the first step. From what we commented on in the Legislature, I think there's support. There's always the devil in the details, but certainly we're moving towards the right direction. We are responsible for our youth and the staggering statistics that you bring forward about the percentage of overweight and obesity in our communities. I don't have a particular question. I look forward to working with you as regulations come forward. So, again, thank you very much for appearing here before us today.

Mr. Rocco Rossi: I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Rossi, for your submission and your presence today.

DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We'll now move to our next presenter, and that is Mr. Peter Gould, who is the general manager of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. As you'll have witnessed, Mr. Gould, you have 15 minutes in which to make your presentation, beginning now.

Mr. Peter Gould: Mr. Chairman, committee members and fellow panellists, I want to thank you for the opportunity to come here today and speak to you on Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2008. As you've already said, my name is Peter Gould. I'm the general manager of Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

Like many of our other panellists and members of the committee, I have been fortunate to have some role in the work to improve nutrition in our schools. I have been with DFO for over 25 years, working to improve our industry for Ontario consumers, processors and our dairy farmers. To give you a bit of background, Dairy Farmers of Ontario is the group representing the largest sector of Ontario agriculture. Our members across the province produce more than 2.5 billion litres of milk every year on their 4,500 dairy farms. This nutritious commodity is also healthy for the Ontario economy. It has an on-farm value of over \$1.7 billion and creates thousands of other jobs in the food sector. We continue to appreciate the support we receive from members of the provincial Parliament, from all parties, in ensuring a vibrant dairy industry in Ontario.

One of DFO's most important programs is our successful elementary school milk program, which was launched in 1987. This program works to improve the health, daily nutrition and learning capabilities of Ontario's elementary school students. The elementary school milk program does this by helping to provide nutritious, fresh and easy-to-access milk every school day to elementary school students.

Dairy farmers, dairy processors and dairy distributors work together to make milk available in schools at a reasonable price. The current program operates with an annual budget of \$1 million, which funds turnkey administrative support, financing for fridges, educational and promotional materials, and contests. Annually, Dairy

Farmers of Ontario make an additional \$1-million nutrition education program investment and also spends about \$400,000 each year on the province-wide dairy educator program, which provides 6,500 classroom presentations.

This means that our total current investment in programs for Ontario schools is more than \$2.4 million every year. Dairy farmers have made it a high priority to work with the province to do even more to bring improved nutrition to our elementary school students. We hope to support the government's priority of improving children's nutrition through an expanded elementary school milk program. We are examining ways to partner with government to ensure that more children receive at least one serving of dairy each day at school. To further raise the profile of the importance of excellent nutrition for our children, Dairy Farmers of Ontario is offering to promote a future government-industry initiative by providing complementary milk to every Ontario elementary school student on the annual World School Milk Day, which this year is September 24.

I wanted to provide this overview of dairy farmers' school initiatives to demonstrate that Ontario dairy farmers are supportive of Ontario's significant steps towards improving the health of children in our school system. Across ministries, government has made children's health a priority through changes to the Education Act, such as the bill that we are discussing today, and with educational programs through the new Ministry of Health Promotion.

Other positive examples include mandating daily physical activity for our students to address childhood obesity, banning junk food in schools to promote healthy eating and offering Ontarians more open policies and opportunities to use schools in our communities. All of these policies have already shown positive outcomes.

The harsh reality is that we have a health crisis amongst our youth. Childhood obesity, diabetes and declining nutrition are severe issues that cannot be ignored. Like most presenting to your committee today and like the education minister and government crafting this bill, I am proud to be working in an industry that is facing these tough issues straight on and trying to help where we can.

Bill 8 adds to the positive policies I listed above. This important legislative change—banning unnaturally occurring trans fats in schools—will have meaningful, positive outcomes.

I am here on behalf of Dairy Farmers of Ontario to fully endorse the proposed changes to the current Education Act. This is a positive step in improving the health of our children.

We also believe that government should consider a healthier children's act to cover and protect all children of all ages. Let me repeat that again: We also believe that government should consider a healthier children's act to cover and protect all children of all ages.

A healthier children's act would house all legislation concerning children's health and nutrition and enable government to implement regulatory or legislative

changes in a more timely fashion, instead of having to revise the Education Act.

We hope that these positive steps for children's nutrition can continue and that we can move beyond banning junk food and trans fats towards a more proactive, healthy policy for Ontario's children. We understand that it is not easy to implement or enforce this type of legislative change, but we applaud the government for taking on unnaturally occurring trans fats in our schools and fully support Bill 8.

I want to thank you for your time. If you have any questions, I'd be pleased to answer them.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you Mr. Gould. You have left ample time for questions—about three minutes each side—and we'll start with the government side.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much. I am pleased to hear that DFO is supporting the bill. I know about the good work you've been doing with the school milk program from some of my past life with school boards. Thank you very much for that.

I know that nutrition of children has been a big concern for a long time, and obviously, your members are aware that this is a ban on synthetic trans fats, not those found in dairy or ruminant meat products.

Mr. Peter Gould: That is correct, yes. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Sandals. To the Conservative side.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you again for appearing here before us today. Certainly, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario have a great added value to all of us in the province, but also you have a huge financial and educational component that you take responsibility for, educating on healthy products and then financially assisting in these school programs.

You brought up the expanded elementary school program. I've been working with Dairy Farmers of Ontario, not just from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock but from all over Ontario. I know that you're looking to further expand a certain product. Maybe I'll ask you about the DHA omega 3; while you have the opportunity, just to comment on that product line and the scientific benefits that have been proven in children of a certain age and development.

Mr. Peter Gould: Yes, certainly. Thank you for that question. DHA, which I hope most of you are familiar with, is one of the omega-3 fatty acids. Within omega 3, there are three, and DHA is the one that is most bioactive and has health benefits, especially for young children with respect to the development of their eyes and nerves and visual acuity and those types of things.

Milk right now is one of the few foods generally available to children that has DHA in it, and when I say that, not all milk; some milks. DHA is relatively difficult to obtain in the diet, fish being the primary source, but as we all know, a lot of kids don't eat fish. We see one of the benefits of having dairy products enhanced with DHA is that children can get access to the DHA through the foods that they normally consume.

We haven't made a direct connection yet to making those products part of the school milk program, but I think there's a very logical connection to do that.

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Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The bill says in the explanatory note: "The Minister may make regulations exempting from the trans fat standards any food or beverage in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products." Have you had discussions with the government about this—the minister, minister's staff or ministry staff?

Mr. Peter Gould: No, we haven't had specific discussions. I think the reference is to the standard of trans fats defined by the Food and Drugs Act at the national level, which exempts ruminant meat and dairy. As I've said, we haven't had discussions, but we're comfortable with that definition.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm just thinking, why was it necessary to say that? Why was it necessary for the government or the minister to say "may make regulations" to exempt you? I don't quite understand that. Do you have a sense of why this is even here?

Mr. Peter Gould: No, I'm not sure why it's there other than to spell out specifically that there are naturally occurring trans fats and there are what one of the previous speakers called industrial trans fats.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right. So why wouldn't you just be exempted? Why wouldn't they just say that?

Mr. Peter Gould: That is what I'm taking from the proposed legislation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I didn't read that, you see. That's why I was asking you, because it says they may do that or they may not. If they want to exempt you, why wouldn't they just say, "You're exempt"? That's why I was puzzled by it.

Mr. Peter Gould: As I said—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Were you puzzled too, a bit?

Mr. Peter Gould: No, as I said, because in the act itself the reference is to the definition in the Food and Drugs Act, if you refer to that, which we did. This just spells out what's in the Food and Drugs Act.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Mr. Marchese, and thank you, Mr. Gould, for your submission and for your presence today.

ONTARIO COLLABORATIVE GROUP ON HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I now invite our next presenters, both registered dietitians, Rita Foscarini and Carol Dombrow, who are representing the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. Welcome. As you take your seats, as you'll know, you have 15 minutes in which to offer your presentation. I think you've given us written materials as

well. I would invite you now to begin. Also, if you might just introduce yourselves individually for the purposes of Hansard and the public record.

But before we begin, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just wanted to say how well you pronounced the name. It's so beautiful: Foscarini. That was very good.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Grazie, Senor. Please begin.

Ms. Rita Foscarini: Thank you. We do have our materials here. Is it appropriate—okay. Great.

Good afternoon, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the committee. My name is Rita Foscarini and, along with my colleague Carol Dombrow, we have come here to speak to you today as registered dietitians and representatives of the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity.

The collaborative group was formed in 2004, and we have representatives from non-profit, health and academic organizations which address healthy eating, physical activity and health weights. I am also a member of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health. Carol is a consultant for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. In addition, the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, provides secretarial support for our group.

In past submissions to government, the advocacy subcommittee of the collaborative group has advocated for funding that supports the implementation of the recommendations in Dr. Sheela Basrur's chief medical officer of health report, *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives*. The collaborative group believes that Ontario schools have an important role to play in not only teaching healthy eating but modeling and putting into practise healthy eating in all situations and activities where food or beverages are made available in our schools.

We believe, and therefore are every supportive of, the government's introduction of Bill 8. We applaud the government's amendments to the Education Act as outlined in Bill 8; in particular, the addition of subsection 8(1), that gives regulatory authority to the government, through the Minister of Education, to "establish policies and guidelines with respect to nutrition standards for food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity." We also support the amendment that requires schools to "comply with the policies and guidelines."

We applaud the government in taking the lead in establishing province-wide policies and guidelines with respect to nutritional standards. This will eliminate duplication of effort and stop inconsistencies of nutrition standards that may exist in schools or school boards across our province.

A number of provincial governments have already taken the initiative to set policy directives and guidelines—for example, Nova Scotia—in creation of the food and nutrition policy for Nova Scotia's public schools.

Here in Ontario, from my experience in working in public health, we have a number of examples of schools

and some school boards that have taken the lead in creating a healthy school nutrition environment and setting policies and guidelines. We applaud those situations.

However, these schools and boards are still in the minority. Most schools are looking for direction from their respective boards on this issue, and I believe that these boards are looking to the Ministry of Education for direction. It is therefore imperative that Ontario schools become exemplary environments for healthy eating. In order to do so, the Ontario Collaborative Group of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity would like to make some further recommendations.

Bill 8 currently outlines restrictions on what can be offered for sale to pupils in cafeterias and in vending machines in schools. The proposed Bill 8 will then have most of its impact in secondary schools as opposed to elementary schools, as they generally do not have cafeterias and many don't have vending machines. Further to that, the bill makes an exemption for foods and beverages prepared or sold during special event days in schools.

Our group feels that it is extremely important that this exemption be removed from the legislation. First of all, these special event days primarily occur in elementary schools, so our youngest students are the ones who would be most affected by this exemption. Secondly, special event days so far have been expressed by the Premier, the media and by the Minister of Education in a letter as pizza days.

Pizza days or other such special food days can occur regularly in schools. I've heard of these occurring every two weeks throughout the school year. What of other special event days? These could be classroom events, such as decorating cupcakes for Valentine's Day, food served at regular school functions during the day or evening, classroom celebrations for the number of books read, or food-sponsored sports days where there might be a full day of physical activity, with sponsored food provided that is not in keeping with good health and not in keeping with healthy eating.

Bill 8 proposes that the minister prescribe the meaning of special event day. We recommend that the exemption for special-event days is problematic, and that these are regular and frequent occurrences in our elementary schools in particular. We therefore recommend that the exemption for special food days be removed from Bill 8.

In order to send a clear message to Ontario students, there must be consistency across the board for all foods and beverages that are presented in a school setting. In many of Ontario's elementary schools, special food days are the place where children, independent of any caregiver, come to school with money to make an independent decision about the food choices or the beverage they wish to have that day. We are suggesting that this exemption, in doing this, we are missing a great opportunity for students to make nutrition the healthy and the easy choice for that child.

My colleague, Carol, will now provide further comments regarding Bill 8 and the collaborative group's recommendations.

Ms. Carol Dombrow: Good afternoon. My name is Carol Dombrow. As Rita mentioned, I'm a registered dietitian and nutrition consultant for the Heart and Stroke Foundation for Ontario and Breakfast for Learning. I'm here representing the Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. I also had the opportunity to help develop the nutrient criteria for vending machines for the Ministry of Education in 2004.

In January 2007, our group, in conjunction with the Ontario disease prevention alliance, developed a proposal for improving food and beverage choices in Ontario schools. This was submitted to the Ministry of Health Promotion, chronic disease prevention and health promotion branch.

In this proposal, the groups provided a plan to involve key stakeholders, including education, health sectors, agriculture and food industry, along with parents and students in the development of food and beverage guidelines. The proposal outlined steps that can be taken from development to implementation of food and beverage standards. The proposal discussed voluntary guidelines for food and beverages sold and served in Ontario schools, though, with the introduction of Bill 8, consistent mandatory food policies would assist with improving food choices in schools right across the province.

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This proposal included: developing a long-term strategy that moves toward healthier alternatives for all instances where food and beverages are offered or sold in a school setting, including fundraising and special events; examining best practices that already exist in schools and school boards in the provinces and jurisdictions and learning from these experiences; and establishing long-term benchmarks and indicators of success for continuous evaluation of the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act.

The collaborative group recommends that a comprehensive provincial school food policy be developed to ensure that healthier food and beverages are sold and served in Ontario schools. Limiting trans fat in food and beverages is one step in moving toward a healthier food supply, but does not ensure that the foods being served in schools will necessarily be healthy. A more comprehensive provincial school food policy is necessary to ensure that all food and beverages available in Ontario schools be consistent with the direction and recommendations in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.

We need to ensure that levels of saturated fat, sodium, sugar, calories, as well as appropriate portion sizes are considered in the development of a provincial school food policy. We also need to make sure that healthy foods are affordable. In order to make significant changes in Ontario schools, it is imperative that consultation involving educators, administrators, parents and students are all included in the process to develop new standards and that the schools are equipped with tools to make the necessary changes.

In closing, the Ontario collaborative group recommends: that the proposed amendments to the Education

Act, as outlined in Bill 8, subsection 8(1), items 29.3 and 29.4 be approved; that the exception for "special event day" be removed from the proposed legislation; that a comprehensive food policy be developed that includes the restriction of trans fat, but goes beyond that to ensure that all foods available in schools reflect the recommendations in Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide; that stakeholder consultation is used to develop more comprehensive school food policies and; that necessary tools are developed to assist with the implementation of the new policy.

We would like to reinforce that having healthy foods and beverages available is only one component of a comprehensive nutrition strategy that is essential to establish a strong foundation for the development of healthy kids in Ontario. A comprehensive nutrition strategy also includes a supportive curriculum, integrating nutrition education into all grades; providing students with media literacy skills which, depending on what happens with advertising to children, they may need very strongly and; ensuring that teachers and educators are given the appropriate training necessary to be able to guide students toward healthy alternatives and be positive role models for their pupils.

Our group would be happy to provide assistance wherever necessary to ensure strong legislation that will work toward truly healthy school environments for Ontario children. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Dombrow and Ms. Foscarini. I now invite the Conservative member for one minute, which goes by briskly.

Mr. Peter Shurman: There's just one thing that concerns me. First of all, congratulations on an excellent presentation. You have described the perfect world. And it's not a perfect world. I've raised two kids the same way, and one eats terribly and the other one is fantastic. Don't ask me why, but I think a lot of people in this room can relate to that.

I just want to ask you about "forbidden fruit syndrome"—my term. If you decide that you're not going to serve a hot dog once in a blue moon, on a special events day, and you create this forbidden fruit by never serving it, don't you run the risk of having people run the other way and eat them all the time, when they can?

Ms. Carol Dombrow: Personally, I don't think so. Do you know what? We have a captive audience in schools. If we provide healthy foods there, the children are going to eat the healthy foods. Someone's shaking their head, but I think it's the same thing at home. If you have healthy foods there, that's what your children are going to learn to eat. I agree that they're still going to go to fast-food restaurants and they're still going to eat outside of the school's property, but I would think that the majority of times, if healthy foods are available, that's what's going to be available to them, that's what's going to be easy and accessible and that's what they'll choose.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): To the NDP.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Two quick questions, if I can. The government, in the English text when they

introduced this bill, said they're dropping trans fats. In the French text it says "l'élimination" of the trans fats. In your document you talk about "Expand the prohibition." The bill says "regulating." What do you make of all this? Are we prohibiting, eliminating, dropping or regulating; and what does "regulating" mean to you?

Ms. Carol Dombrow: I would hope that they would follow the trans fat task force recommendations that were put out by Health Canada; and Heart and Stroke co-chaired the committee. So I'm hoping that we're all talking the same language and they will be following the same recommendations from the trans fat task force.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Has any MPP or ministerial staff or anyone said that's what they would do, or you're just hoping?

Ms. Carol Dombrow: I'm not sure. I haven't spoken to anyone directly, so I don't know. But it would only make sense that the same recommendations were followed provincially as are recommended nationally.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You would think.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): To the government side.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much for your expert advice, and just to assure you, it has been said a number of times in Hansard by both the minister and myself that our intent is to use the Health Canada definition of "trans fat-free."

Ms. Carol Dombrow: Excellent.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thanks to you both on behalf of your group, the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activities, Ms. Foscarini and Ms. Dombrow.

FOOD AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS OF CANADA

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenters to please come forward, Ms. Phyllis Tanaka, vice-president of scientific and regulatory affairs on food policy, and Ms. Catherine Abel, manager of provincial policy and government relations, for Food and Consumer Products of Canada. Welcome. I would invite you to begin now.

Ms. Phyllis Tanaka: Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the standing committee on social policy on Bill 8. We'll begin by introducing ourselves. As mentioned, I'm Phyllis Tanaka and I'm the vice-president of scientific and regulatory affairs for Food and Consumer Products of Canada.

Ms. Catherine Abel: My name is Catherine Abel and I'm the manager of policy and government relations for Food and Consumer Products of Canada.

We are here today on behalf of food and beverage companies from across the country. Our members range from small, independently and privately owned companies to large, global multinationals, all of whom manufacture and distribute in Canada. Our members represent 80% of the food sold on grocery shelves today.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about how we, policy-makers and industry, can best encourage healthy eating among children and youth in Ontario and across Canada.

Bill 8 is very important, because it prohibits the sale of foods containing certain amounts of industrial trans fats and it enables the development of province-wide nutrition policies designed to encourage healthy eating patterns in Ontario's public schools. FCPC and its member companies support both these measures because they are consistent with the industry's own efforts to help fight childhood obesity.

FCPC member companies are in fact transforming the food supply through innovative product reformulation, making it easier to stock healthier foods in Ontario schools. In addition to reducing sodium, trans fat and sugar in existing products, companies are investing significantly in new product development. Canadians have access to a wide range of affordable products, including those enhanced with nutritional value with the addition of omega 3, as we heard mentioned earlier, calcium, fibre and vitamins. FCPC member companies are leaders in food science and are using that knowledge to advance Canadians' health.

A few years ago, FCPC conducted research across our member food and beverage companies to capture their product reformulation progress. The survey showed that in 2004, 62% of food companies surveyed introduced new health choice products; 41% of companies introduced products with less fat, 13% introduced products with no fat, and 19% introduced products with no trans fat; 22% of companies introduced new products with less sugar, 13% introduced products with no sugar; and 62% of companies also reformulated existing products to be healthier. Elimination of fat, particularly trans fat, was even then a priority focus of reformulation. Finally, 23% of companies made packaging changes to address concerns about overly large portion sizes.

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FCPC recently went back to our member companies, and an initial analysis of the results shows that companies continue to make significant progress in two key areas. Companies continue to reduce the nutrients that have commonly become known as the nutrients of public health concern, namely fats, sugar and sodium. And companies are adding beneficial ingredients and nutrients to products, for example, added fibre, use of whole grains and addition of omega 3 fatty acids.

Not least of all, reducing the levels of industrial trans fat in the food supply remains a top priority for the food industry. In June 2006, industry reiterated its commitment to cut industrial trans fat in the food supply and to achieve the following threshold by June 2009: limit the trans fat content of vegetable oils and soft spreadable margarines to 2% of the total fat content and limit the trans fat content for all other foods to 5% of the total fat content, including ingredients sold to restaurants.

These measures are in accordance with recommendations by the federal trans fat task force. Co-chaired by

Health Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the task force was convened in November 2004 to provide Health Canada with strategies to reduce the amount of trans fat in Canadian diets. FCPC was also an active member of the task force and fully supported its recommendations to government.

Food companies submit reformulation data to Health Canada as part of the government's ongoing monitoring program. Health Canada has committed to publishing the progress updates approximately every six months over the next two years. The first set of data, published in December 2007, demonstrated significant improvement across all classes of prepackaged foods. For example, based on an analysis of prepackaged products sold in grocery stores in 2006, the following products met the 5% trans fat limit: 60% of cookies, 85% of crackers, 75% of frozen potato products and 83% of frozen chicken products. The foods that were sampled represented the top-selling brands for each food category and accounted for more than 80% of sales within that food category. The full set of data and product lists are available on Health Canada's website. We've included the website address in our written submission provided in your packages.

Given the significant improvement these results demonstrate, it is important that provinces in the process of developing trans fat policies ensure they are aligned with the federal approach. Canadians' health is best achieved when consistent policies and standards are applied across the country. Ontario can benefit from the task force's work and the reformulation progress already achieved by ensuring its policies are aligned with the federal approach of achieving the 2% and 5% limits within the next two years.

FCPC therefore recommends to the committee that, following the passage of Bill 8, Ontario develop guidelines that limit the allowable percentage of trans fats in products to 2% and 5% of the total fat content, as recommended by the trans fat task force. It is important to note that the trans fat task force recommendations are not federal regulations. Rather, they provide living guidance to industry and may change over time as the allowable limits are achieved, potentially adjusted to reflect industry's continuous improvement and to address the practical realities of specific product categories. For example, low fat products are by definition limited to a low total fat content. But because the task force recommendations specify that trans fat can only be a percentage of total fat in a product, low fat products are disproportionately impacted. The lower the fat, the lower the allowable trans fat. The allowable limit of trans in low fat products may be adjusted in the future to address this issue. Similarly, products such as yogourt with granola contain a mix of naturally occurring trans—that is, originating from ruminant meat or dairy products—and industrial trans. These foods present a challenge because, when you add the natural trans and the industrial trans amounts together, they can exceed the 5% limit of total fat. This is another example where the allowable limit may be ad-

justed in the future to address the practical considerations of the food category. Therefore, FCPC strongly recommends that in order to ensure continuous improvement and the ability to make future threshold adjustments, Ontario consider using guidelines rather than a prescriptive regulatory approach.

Finally, we'd like to address the second important objective of Bill 8, which is to enable the development of school nutrition policies designed to promote healthy eating patterns in children and youth.

FCPC was pleased to accept a recent invitation to serve on the multi-stakeholder committee tasked with developing those nutrition policies. As you heard at the beginning of this presentation, the food and beverage industry has an important role to play in ensuring that children and youth can choose from a wide range of safe, affordable and healthful products. By reformulating products lower in calories, sodium, sugar and fats, as well as reducing portion sizes and offering alternative packaging options, favourite brands can fit healthier profiles. These innovations are ongoing and will continue to accelerate. In fact, the healthier-for-you food category is one of the fastest-growing categories in the grocery store. FCPC looks forward to working with the Ministry of Education as a member of the multi-stakeholder group.

In closing, FCPC appreciates the opportunity to address the committee on social policy on this important piece of legislation. We look forward to working with ministry officials to make the provisions of Bill 8 a reality. Thank you, and now I'd be happy to take some questions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you very much. We'll have about a minute or so with Mr. Marchese to start.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yesterday, I introduced a bill in the Legislature that would ban commercial advertising on food products and drinks to kids under the age of 13. Is it a fair assumption that you don't support that bill?

Ms. Catherine Abel: The view of FCPC members is that childhood obesity is a very complex problem that requires multiple solutions.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right.

Ms. Catherine Abel: I also want to make the point that the food industry has a very important role to play in helping fight obesity, and that's why 16 leading food and beverage companies, representing 90% of advertisements in children's programming, have committed to shifting their advertising directed to children under 12 to the promotion of healthier dietary choices and healthy, active living.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Let me ask you a quick question. Dr. McKeown says that we should do this, based on the bill that I introduced, and he also says, based on their study, that a lot of the products that are advertised to kids are rich in calories—the majority of them—and poor in nutrients. Do you agree with that?

Ms. Catherine Abel: No. If you look at the provisions of this voluntary program that the major food companies

have undertaken, you'll see that in fact eight of those companies actually no longer advertise to children at all.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I'll have to intervene there. Thank you, Mr. Marchese. To the government side.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, just to say thank you for presenting to us today. I'm pleased that you'll be continuing to work with the committee. Just for the information of members, there is a working group that has a variety of stakeholders—dietitians, Heart and Stroke, a variety of people—who will be working on the committee to look at the overall nutritional guidelines. So we're pleased that this work is going forward with professional advice.

Ms. Catherine Abel: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Mr. Shurman.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The last group addressed the issue of special event days and seemed pretty firm in their position on no exemptions. The bill entertains exempting special event days and you haven't alluded to it at all. You're a registered dietitian, are you not?

Ms. Catherine Abel: Phyllis Tanaka is.

Mr. Peter Shurman: What is your stance on special event days and the exemption?

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Ms. Phyllis Tanaka: I think it's not as straightforward as just getting rid of that kind of program. I would go back to an earlier comment that children need to have the opportunity to have hot dogs once in a while. As long as the foundation at the school is one of healthy, active living and nutritious food as the basis, then the school food policy exemption for special events should not prove harmful.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thanks to you both, Ms. Tanaka and Ms. Abel, for your representation and materials on behalf of Food and Consumer Products of Canada.

COMPASS GROUP CANADA

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite Ross Munro, president of Chartwells Education Dining Services, from Compass Group Canada. Mr. Munro, welcome. As you've seen, you have 15 minutes in which to make your presentation. I invite you to begin now.

Mr. Ross Munro: Thank you very much. We support Bill 8 and the initiatives of the government of Ontario to create guidelines and regulations governing nutritional standards for all food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises and in connection with a school-related activity. We believe in the importance of working together with the provincial government on issues that concern the overall health and welfare of our youth. We believe that a bright future for our youth begins with a focus on the delivery of nutritious options and healthy foods for students in our schools.

The only way to do this is via government support that includes key educational messages and ongoing encouragement that is delivered within the school system begin-

ning at an early age. We believe that Bill 8 can assist the provincial government to deliver strong messages about the importance of healthy eating and promote a positive influence on this critical undertaking.

Delivered effectively, over the long term we believe the outcome of this key messaging will be very important with regard to the health and health-related issues facing Ontarians today, including the increase we are witnessing in childhood obesity, diabetes and, of course, rising health care costs.

We have been proactively involved in developing nutrition-based programs that offer healthy, balanced choices for the past several years, including participation in the Eat Smart advisory council, which is a highly successful program, in our view.

Chartwells Education Dining Services has been working toward reducing the amount of artificial trans fats found in the foods we serve since November 2006. We will be compliant with the recommendations from the Canadian Trans Fat Task Force, Health Canada, 2006, that oils and margarines contain less than 2% trans fat by June 2008. We will be compliant also with the recommendation that total trans fat content be limited to 5% of total fat content on all other foods by March 2009.

Just a little bit of who we are and what we bring to the table: We are a member of Compass Group Canada. We provide food services in 37 boards in the province of Ontario, 17 community colleges, and numerous universities in the province. We serve kindergarten through grade 12. We serve higher education, offering programs and solutions to fit unique needs to students. We are committed to providing responsible, healthy eating solutions and nutritional education to our customers. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Munro. We have lots of time for questions, perhaps even four or five minutes each side, beginning with the government.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It's good to get an update on how a company that services a lot of major contracts in cafeterias is moving along the spectrum in terms of evolving to be able to meet the guidelines. So thank you for sharing that information with us.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): To the Conservative side.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I just want to thank you for appearing before the committee today. Your presentation was excellent. We have no questions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mr. Munro, you talked about schools and the importance of teaching—I think you said—healthy eating.

Mr. Ross Munro: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How do we compete—teachers, dietitians or anyone who is trying to promote healthy eating—in the face of billions of dollars that are spent yearly to promote products that are rich in calories and poor in nutrients? How do we compete with that?

Mr. Ross Munro: I think we start at home. It is certainly education- and home-based. We make it fun. In our operations, during Nutrition Month as an example, we have contests where the school that serves more healthy meals by percentage of meals served, relative to the past, in a particular school board will get a prize. Similar to what you would see at Shopper's Drug Mart when you buy the shoe and put it on the wall, we have a program that says, "You were caught making a healthy choice." We have got to make these things fun. We have to make them cultural. They do begin at home, and they blend with education, home and folks like ourselves to ensure that we deliver.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So, Ross, those are nice ideas.

Mr. Ross Munro: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How do we compete with commercial advertising, where we're commercializing our kids, where they're sitting in front of the television? I know it starts at home, but a lot of parents are working overtime, now more than ever. A lot of parents have two or three jobs. Kids are sitting in front of the television. They're watching commercials that simply tell them that a lot of the products they're seeing are good. They go to Mom and Dad and say, "I want that." They go to Grandpa and say, "I want that." How do we deal with that?

Mr. Ross Munro: Our view is that balance is what it's about. Somebody talked earlier about the forbidden fruit, and that has always been my concern in the provision of healthy food in school cafeterias. I have a 19-year-old son and a 16-year-old son, and I heard the gentleman opposite talking about how he's got one who eats well and one who doesn't. I think both of my sons eat relatively well, but every once in a while we're going through the drive-through. That's the bottom line. So it's not about competing with—well, it is about competing, to some degree, but it's about an acknowledgement that this exists, and that occasional is really quite okay. It's about teaching people what choices to make, even if you don't make them every day. It comes back to the education.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: One last question: Everyone supports Bill 8, it appears. A lot of them are simply saying we could be bolder. Do you think the government could be bolder and do a little more, or do you think we're going at it in a way that is progressive, manageable and so on?

Mr. Ross Munro: Our program, corporately, is called Balanced Choices, so I believe in a balanced approach. I do believe it's more about educating and encouraging than it is mandating, because I think we get better participation.

Let me just share with you that when we have mandated—I heard a lady earlier mention the province of Nova Scotia, and I could name other provinces; we are a national organization—when we get too aggressive in our mandate, what we see is a leaving of the school property, a leaving of the campus, to go and acquire things in other

places. The issue there is twofold. First is the issue of students leaving the campus, which means the potential injury and so forth of them leaving the campus. The other piece is that it takes away a little bit of the community. So while I absolutely embrace, and we have a skyrocketing use of, the balanced choice programs in our facilities, it is still important to understand that if we don't offer routinely—not every day necessarily, but if we don't include—we will lose a good majority of the people who will vote with their conscience—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Munro, I'll have to intervene there. Thank you Mr. Marchese, and thank you for your submission on behalf of Compass Group Canada.

LUNCH LADY GROUP INC.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I would now invite our next presenter, Ms. Ruthie Burd, who is the president of the Lunch Lady Group. There is a written submission, which I trust all the members of the committee have received.

Mr. Dave Levac: Mr. Chairman, while they're setting up, just a quick question. I checked my pile, and there have been a couple of deputations where we didn't have a written submission. If we could get those submitted afterwards, because I think they might submit them after, I'd appreciate that.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Certainly. If there are any deputations for today, I direct the clerk to submit that to you. As well, I think there are some coming only as written deputations later.

Ms. Burd, please begin.

Ms. Ruthie Burd: Thank you. First, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Ruthie Burd, and I'm the president of the Lunch Lady Group.

I want to tell you a little bit about our company, because I'm also speaking to you from the other side of the fence. I am a food service provider. Our company makes probably in excess of 9,000 meals per day now for kids at school. Most of our programs run one day per week in school.

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About 15 years ago, I was faced with a situation. I have one son who has autism, and I needed a job that I made myself. I didn't really know what to do, and I came up with this idea of lunches for kids at school, because it happened at noon and I'd be able to take him to speech therapy in the afternoon. That was the only motivation. I didn't know anything about cooking; I couldn't cook, as a matter of fact. My mother had died when I was 13, and my dad and I lived on Dinty Moore beef stew all through my high school years. It's a very good thing there wasn't the availability of fast food that there is now, or I'm sure I would have a serious weight problem now, because we did whatever was convenient. It never occurred to my dad and me to learn how to cook; we just did what we felt was most convenient for us. But we got through, and

my dad, bless his heart, gave me a lot of great life ideas about how one should do things in life, and how one should always go ultimately with their gut and with their conscience.

So I found myself in a business, making lunches for school kids in an environment where no one believed anyone needed lunches for school kids. Fifteen years ago, nutrition was strictly a poverty issue. I went to several meetings of different coalitions and it was all poverty-related. It wasn't seen as a convenience problem. In many respects, the crisis we face today is all about affluence and the availability of too much food sold in bulk at too good of a deal price and our desire to have treats all day long.

It was interesting. The one gentleman was talking about removing hot dogs, and I think fries or whatever, from school offerings, as though kids would not have any other opportunity to eat hot dogs. I have a son, and if we had them in the fridge, he'd eat them raw out of the pack, and the whole thing as well. So I live in one of those houses where we never have anything really decent to eat, but if I bring in a treat, I expect it all to be gone. I don't tell my children how to eat it, because kids do not eat like adults think they do. If we have a huge box of Fruit Roll-Ups and we want them to manage it one a day, for two weeks—they don't eat like that. They'll eat every Fruit Roll-Up until it's all gone. Anyone who has kids knows they do that. So don't bring it into the house unless you want them to eat it.

What happened in our business—I'll backtrack a bit. Eventually, one school, after two years, agreed to start the program, which was a great relief to me because my husband was getting tired of throwing money into my business on a monthly basis. So he was most relieved. Today, the Lunch Lady serves in over 410 schools. We're in three provinces and we're just starting in our fourth province.

Along the road, we started taking a really good look at how kids eat at school. There is a lot of scary stuff going on at school, and we know this because we're the ones who are delivering food every day. Teachers are usually in the staff room, and the principal as well. We're the ones who are delivering in the classrooms, and we go and see what's in the garbage. We have an invasion of snack food, truly an invasion. We see no full potato chip bags in the garbage, but we see whole apples, sandwiches and whole lunches. Parents, in wanting to compensate their children for eating the whole wheat sandwich they packed, and a good sandwich—we see a lot of great sandwiches in the garbage—have given them a granola bar, cheese and crackers; that kind with the little dippy thing, which is nice for a little treat, but it has become an everyday occurrence. Sometimes it's a chocolate bar or a selection of small chocolate bars because you don't want to give them a big chocolate bar, because that would be too much sugar.

Fruit-laden fruit punch—and I've even had parents call me to ask if a Fruit Roll-Up with vitamin C would be considered a fruit choice. People are really, truly—when

you say victims of the media, it's really very true in some respects. Parents don't send the things they send in lunches because they want to be bad parents; they want to reward their children for eating the healthy sandwich they prepared for them. But that's not how things work at school.

The interesting thing in what we've seen, or what we've decided to do as a company, is that you really have to set the mark somewhere. You really have to take a stand and stick to it. We read a paper several years ago—well, maybe not that long ago—that was written by Lucy Valleau, who wrote a paper called Call to Action. Lucy lives in York region, and we serve her daughter, actually. She's at one of the schools we serve. We read that—my father told me about conscience and about the right thing to do. Honestly, I read that and I thought, my gosh, how can we do that as an organization?

I have to tell you that since we switched the white buns for whole wheat—whole wheat wraps, everything else—our business has grown in the last 12-month period, from 285 to 410 schools, and growing on a daily basis. We now have 33 kitchens that offer Lunch Lady lunches and we've created a whole industry of competitors that didn't want to pay my franchise fee—what can I do? But they thought, "What a great business to get into." All over the place there are businesses springing up and they're serving whole wheat buns because we've set an expectation that there'll be whole wheat buns in school.

I've got a whole bunch of notes here but I'm probably not going to read any of them.

I'm just thinking that it's up to the Ministry of Education, the government, to set standards of what they think is in the best interests of kids at school. I'm out here in the marketplace. It's up to me, it's up to food providers, it's up to us to meet your requirements. The school marketplace is a huge market, and it's a market where for business there is profit. It's a business like anything else, but that doesn't mean we can't be profitable and do the right thing at the same time. Who says we can't do that?

We have the food ideas. They're called different things, depending where you read: "maximum," "moderate," "minimum," or they're called "eat always," "eat sometimes" or "eat seldom." The problem, when you go into a high school cafeteria, is that they'll say, "Yes, okay, french fries." There's nothing wrong with french fries. I've been to the drive-through. I take my kids to McDonald's on occasion. Every now and then I have to have a Big Mac; I want to have it. There's nothing wrong for me to do that on my time. But when you're in school, if you're in a cafeteria, who's telling you that you can't have french fries 100% of the time? Doesn't "eat seldom" only mean "eat seldom" if you eat it seldom? If you eat it every day, is that eating seldom? That's not; that's eating more than sometimes. If you have three cookies with your lunch, if you buy three cookies, that's not seldom. That's a lot at one shot.

In the middle of it, we have to recognize that there are plenty of opportunities to get cookies at home. There are

plenty of opportunities to go to McDonald's or to the drive-through. It's a treat; there's nothing wrong with it. There's no bad food, but there are some foods you should eat a whole lot more of than others.

If you're sitting in an elementary school room and they're teaching you the curriculum—what healthy eating is at school is right in the curriculum—and then it's giant cookie day at school, what does that mean in terms of what adults tell you? Really, honestly, what does that mean?

In our experience in changing how we deliver our product—BC has legislation that's been mandated and is quite all-encompassing. I attached a copy of an article that appeared in a paper about our kitchen in Coquitlam, which serves school district 43. Yes, it was difficult—no question. Is it the right thing to do? We as a company really feel so and we really pushed our franchisees to do it.

It's doable if we all work together. If we all keep our focus on the fact that what we want to do is in the best interests of kids, educating parents—gosh, parents want to do the right job but, holy smokes, if you're arguing about the planner and if they did their homework, when they start nagging you for Fruit Roll-Ups and all those goodies to throw in the lunches, it's really hard to say no. Yes, maybe it should all start in the home, but that's not working. Parents know what's good for kids; I'm sure we all know. It's just that people get wrapped up and there's peer pressure.

Having the right snack at school is like having the right brand of shoes. There are cool snacks for kids at school, and if you get into the system and talk to kids, you know how challenging that environment can be to work in. It's truly an amazing environment. But if you give kids the chance, you'll find that they'll try all sorts of things, because peer pressure is a wonderful thing. If you have sushi on the menu or something more exotic, like a Sahara picnic plate—there was one we really liked. It was hummus, but it was legume-free hummus because we had to be modified for allergies, and pita, veggies, some fruit, and a fortune cookie so you could tell your fortune just for fun. You'd be surprised; kids will try that. They will. You should have more faith in kids. We should have more faith in kids. We have to. We're the guys who sit and tell them to eat breakfast, and we drink a cup of coffee. It's all that stuff. Who's going to fill in for us?

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The school is the one environment we can control. The school is the one environment where we can have some control and really assist kids. I invite you, and I'd be happy to take you on a tour, to see what's really happening in our schools.

Before I close, because I'd love you to ask me some questions, I was at a school council meeting—this is absolutely true, and I'll never tell you, no matter what you do, twist my thumbs or anything—and before me, they were saying that they wanted to raise funds to have a fruit and veggie day in the school. I was thinking: "That's

great." Isn't that really great? It would be universal for everybody; they'd raise funds. They were going to raise the money by having a KFC day. Nobody thought there was anything remotely unusual about that. So that's the point where I'll leave you.

Again, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to you. Anything I missed, I'm sure is in my notes somewhere. I think the refining food industry coming to us to ask us if they can make food for us—they want our business. It's a whole thing, but it has to start with somebody taking a stand.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Burd. We'll begin with the Conservative side.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'll just say thank you very much. An interesting presentation, and talk about coming from the horse's mouth—you seem to know it.

Answer one little question: What's wrong with a Fruit Roll-Up?

Ms. Ruthie Burd: There's nothing wrong with a Fruit Roll-Up. You get plenty of time to eat it at home. Honestly, there's nothing wrong—it's sugar.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Is that all it is?

Ms. Ruthie Burd: Mostly.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Because I've read the ingredients in those things—again, when I'm in the deep recesses of my mind, bringing up my kids a million years ago—and I remember it being processed, but I don't remember being over—

Ms. Ruthie Burd: There's fruit juice in it. There really is, but there's lots of sugar. It's mostly carbs.

There's a concern about the kids who are obese. We have parents dropping off McDonald's and we see all sorts of stuff. All this stuff comes into the school. There you've got these kids—what percentage have you been told?—who already have a problem with weight. They're seeing all this stuff come in. What are they suppose to do on pizza day? Say, "Sorry"? Or with the candy or the treats, when they bring everything in? It's really hard. It's just the sugar count, and there's nothing wrong with it—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you Mr. Shurman. Mr. Marchese, one minute.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ruthie, if you're right, why is it that the corporations are not just jumping to this opportunity? You're saying you can make money, but I don't see that many commercials saying, "Here's an apple; isn't this beautiful? Here's a carrot. We could make a spinach ice cream"—as an example, to tool it up. Why don't they do that if they could make money out of it?

Ms. Ruthie Burd: I don't get the spinach ice cream, to be honest, but I think that sometimes—the Field of Dreams thing was that if you build it, they will come. I think it's very much this thing. I think that you'll find that food providers that deal with school communities out in British Columbia are going to start getting a lot more creative with their products. I think the food industry absolutely wants to do the right thing, but they have shareholders and stuff to answer to.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's rough, isn't it?

Ms. Ruthie Burd: Primarily, I answer to my conscience.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Marchese.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I thought the end of your story was going to be that they were going to sell chocolate bars; that's always the fallback. However, just to say thank you, because you've given us some real practical experience that, when we move to good nutritional guidelines, in fact it's doable. I know there's some research in Minnesota and in Denmark looking at delivery. When we all move to the guidelines together, then it becomes doable. So thank you for giving that practical experience for us.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Yes, Mr. Levac.

Mr. Dave Levac: Mr. Chairman, just for information purposes, I'll just share with Mr. Marchese that the best commercial on TV right now, bar none, is when the kid opens the lunch bag and screams and hollers and clears the cafeteria when an apple is shown. I'd just thought I'd share that with you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Levac. Thank you, Mrs. Sandals, and thank you, Ms. Burd, for your presence and your submission.

ONTARIO SOCIETY OF NUTRITION PROFESSIONALS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I now invite our next presenters, Mary Ellen Prange, a dietitian, and Sielen Raoufi, also a dietitian, of the Ontario Society of Nutritional Professionals in Public Health. Welcome. First of all, please be seated and introduce yourselves. You may begin now.

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: Good afternoon. I'm Mary Ellen Prange. I'm a registered dietitian. I'm here today representing the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health. I'm also a member of the School Nutrition Workgroup. To my right is Sielen Raoufi, who is also a registered dietitian, a member of our organization and the School Nutrition Workgroup.

As public health nutritionists, we have expertise and front-line experience working directly with schools and school boards in fulfillment of the public health mandate to promote and support nutrition education and healthy eating environments in schools, as well as to assist schools and school boards in creating nutrition policies.

OSNPPH received its charter in 1977. We are the official organization of registered dietitians working in the Ontario public health system. Our members are primarily employed by public health units. We are experts in population health promotion, with a focus on disease prevention. OSNPPH currently has 174 members in all of Ontario's 36 public health units.

Four years ago, OSNPPH released a landmark document, which our previous presenter mentioned, entitled Call to Action: Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment. I have to tell you that four years ago, if I thought we would be sitting here talking about this today—I just can't imagine. It is wonderful that we are

here. This document identifies the urgent need for local school boards, local public health units and the provincial government to work together to take action on improving the nutrition environment in Ontario schools, because it can be quite poor in some instances. The document has received quite a bit of attention across the province, as well as nationally and even internationally, and has been used as a reference for the development of nutrition policies in other provinces.

I'd just like to pass it over to Sielen to give a brief overview of the Call to Action.

Ms. Sielen Raoufi: As Mary Ellen mentioned, the document provides the framework to create, implement and support a healthy nutrition environment in Ontario schools. The recommendations centre around nine essential elements that are meant to structure in the format of the comprehensive school health model, as well as being consistent with the Ministry of Education's healthy schools model. The recommendations are intended for all key stakeholders who have a role in school health. Those would be the province, school boards, boards of health, as well as the schools and their communities.

The nine essential elements must all work together to create a healthy environment. As well as having a very strong health and physical education curriculum in Ontario schools, that have a very strong healthy eating component, the Call to Action is calling for consistency between what the students learn about in the classroom and what they see modelled in their schools, whether that be the food that's served to them in lunch programs or on special food days, the vending machines that they might buy snacks or beverages from, as well as their cafeterias, tuck shops and fundraising.

That's a very important one to point out. Kids could be learning about the importance of fruits and veggies in the classroom and in Canada's Food Guide, but they're seeing that for fundraising, the school is selling chocolate or chocolate-covered almonds that are being promoted as a snack.

The other elements are consistent with developing food and nutrition policies in the school: the importance of positive role modelling by school staff; safe and pleasant eating areas provided for students; appropriate scheduling of nutrition breaks; parent and community education and involvement in all school nutrition-related initiatives; nutrition education for students as well as for staff; and provision of student nutrition programs.

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: We commend the province for taking action to introduce Bill 8, as this represents significant progress in following up on two important recommendations in the Call to Action. We believe that this legislation, if passed, can have a major impact on the nutritional and overall health of Ontario's children and youth.

However, there are two main areas where we feel the bill could be strengthened in order to maximize its impact. I do have a handout; I will pass it around.

The Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act must be inclusive of all instances where food and beverages are offered or sold in both elementary and secondary schools.

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The nutrition environments vary greatly between elementary and secondary schools. For example, in contrast to secondary schools, most elementary schools do not have cafeterias and many do not have snack vending machines, making aspects of the proposed legislation non-applicable to the elementary setting. An elementary school's special event days, including special food days like pizza and hot dog days and classroom celebrations, are common and may occur on a frequent basis—even daily. Making these exempt from the legislation will present a serious loophole that will allow for regular availability of unhealthy choices to children in elementary schools.

Secondly, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act must include evidence-based, comprehensive provincial nutrition standards applicable to all foods and beverages in Ontario schools. We would recommend, based on the differences between the secondary and elementary settings, that we have separate standards applicable to those two settings.

A lot of work has gone on in the province by public health with schools; because it's our mandate, we've been doing this for many years. But there's been a lot of interest, I would say, since the Call to Action has been released. School boards are calling us now. We used to have to kind of knock on their door; now they're coming to us. We have created an innovative tool kit called Nutrition Tools for Schools that's being used in 27 of the 36 health departments. It includes a food standards reference guide, so it already has nutrition standards contained in it that are applicable to the elementary setting. There is a program that I believe some of the other speakers have mentioned, Eat Smart, which is a provincial program. It's being implemented in about 20 of the health departments. There are 235 secondary schools participating in the Eat Smart program. The nutrition standard for cafeterias is just undergoing revision at the moment. In fact, by January 2009, there will be nutrition standards included in the Eat Smart program for vending machines and tuck shops that could be applicable to the secondary setting.

In general, we encourage a comprehensive set of nutrition standards that would go beyond trans fats and that would be inclusive of general nutrition guidelines for Canadians, and that a consultative process be employed, whereby all stakeholders can have input into the nutrition standards.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Have you finished your presentation?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: Yes. I will end there, thank you.

I just wanted to mention that we do have copies of the Call to Action here today, too, if anybody is interested in having their own copy.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Fine. Beginning with the NDP for about two minutes per side, Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mary Ellen and Sielen, obviously everybody supports this initiative, but what I hear from many of you is that there's more that we should do and it could be stronger and bolder. But here's my sense: When the government doesn't make any amendments and doesn't make it that much stronger, most of you will go back home and say, "Well, it's not so bad. We'll just continue working as we go and urge governments to do more the next time." Is that a fair assessment?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: Well, we have been working very hard for four years since our Call to Action has been released. It is a comprehensive approach to health and promoting healthy eating and good nutrition. We're going to carry on with that no matter what this bill does. We have 27 health units that are implementing Nutrition Tools for Schools. They're already working with schools and school boards to try to limit foods of minimum nutritional value in schools.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand. I want to ask you another question. I introduced a bill yesterday that would prohibit commercial advertising of food and drink to young people under the age of 13. What do you think of the idea?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: I think that's a piece of the puzzle that will help in having a healthier population.

Ms. Sielen Raoufi: I think it's an important part of what a school nutrition policy should include as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Marchese. To the government side.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much for coming today. It's great to see so many public health professionals here.

A previous group, the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity, specifically zeroed in on the special event days. I guess I'd like your perspective. You've been working through the health units in schools. Are we not having a major impact? Aren't parent councils keen to keep their children healthy? Are they not following guidelines? What's your experience in terms of the special event days and, from your perspective, the types of foods that are being served following the kind of intensive educational efforts that you're making?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: There are some schools that are very proactive on this, and they are making changes and doing things to improve their special events. For example, I worked very closely with a school in Hamilton that was serving pizza, cookies and some sort of fruit drink and they completely changed that inside of a year. There was a lot of politics behind that. It's a slow process and I would say that at this point it's still a lot of the more keen schools that we're working with. There's a lot of work to be done across the province, and that's where legislation is really going to have an impact, I think.

Does that answer your question well enough?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Would you advocate for the special event days exemption to be removed?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: Yes. We're very clear on that, that that's our stance, because they're not special. In some schools, they're happening every day, depending on how you define it.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We'll move now to Ms. Scott for two minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You said that you had worked with one school and were able to change the pizza, cookies, fruit juice. Just as an example, what did you change it to?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: They now actually have real juice. The pizza is still there, but there's no cookie; they get an apple or some other type of fruit.

Ms. Laurie Scott: For the schools that are trying the program—the smart program, is it?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: Eat Smart.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Eat Smart program. We've heard a lot of discussion about the psychology and how children think differently of what to eat than adults. How have you found that has gone over in the schools?

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: The Eat Smart program? We are making the program more comprehensive. Right now, it's just limited to the cafeteria, so the cafeteria will offer healthier choices; they'll have a minimum number. But the vending machines are still what they are; the tuck shop is still what it is. Eventually, we want the Eat Smart program to be inclusive of that.

We've started by introducing some healthier choices into the cafeterias through Eat Smart, because they have to meet a minimum standard in order to—it's an award of excellence. So not only do they have a number of healthier food choices, but they've done some other things around the operation of the cafeteria.

Ms. Laurie Scott: And compliance with the children getting into the program: Are they content or do they want to run to the vending machine around the corner or bring more money to the tuck shop?

Ms. Sielen Raoufi: A significant component of the program is the promotion of it, because we realize that you can't just put healthy food in a cafeteria and expect that children will know to choose it or will gravitate toward it. So a big component is the awareness-raising, the education. A lot of times it's fun initiatives; it's point-of-purchase promotion that goes on. When public health works one on one with the schools in implementing the program, we're very clear to them that you have to promote this program and work on other education initiatives along with it.

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange: And I'd like to add—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Ms. Scott, and thanks to you both, Ms. Raoufi and Ms. Prange, for your presentation and written submission today.

FOOD SENSE HEALTHY VENDING SERVICES

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I would now invite our next presenter, Ms. Maggie Cavalier, who is the owner of Food Sense Healthy Vending Services. Ms.

Cavalier, please have a seat. I'd just let you know you have 15 minutes, and I'd invite you to begin now.

Ms. Maggie Cavalier: Good afternoon, Chairman, members, fellow presenters. I have a different perspective to this. My name is Maggie Cavalier. My husband and I started a company called Food Sense Healthy Vending. We provide healthier options to children, youth and adults, and it's been a mandate for our company. We do have documents to be handed out. They include a history of what I've been working on to get this initiative instituted in schools. I included them so that you would see the degree of effort and commitment that has gone into this from me and the company.

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This company was established in an endeavour to steer the trend in fast food in a healthy direction. My passion, drive and commitment come from many sources, but originally from my background with the Heart and Stroke.

The reason this subject of children and poor nutrition and trans fats is so close to my heart is because I have a grandson who has Asperger's. My grandson weighs 250 pounds. My grandson is 13 years old. My grandson is now in a high school that has vending.

I have worked on this for three years. What you've done with the elementary schools, from what I see, is phenomenal, except you could do without the fundraising and the chocolate bars. That was a little scary. I found out a lot of the elementary schools do not have milk in their schools.

My concern today is trans fats and what it does to people like me who are grandparents of children in the school system. My company lobbies against the poor nutritional options and habits consistently bombarding our children's living environment. It's a frightening statement made by the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons that this is the first generation that may not outlive their parents due to poor lifestyle illnesses. It's scary when the Heart and Stroke can say 28% of our youth and adolescents are obese.

I've been lobbying this call to action for three years. This is what I live for and this is the reason Food Sense was created. Education should begin at home. Finally, the movement toward healthy lifestyles is clearly mounting and parents are taking notice of what children put in their mouths. They're being made aware of the increase in adult-onset diseases now showing up in our children at alarming, record rates. It makes sense to follow through on this education in their second learning environment, which is our schools.

I applaud the reduction or elimination of trans fats, but it's not enough. I can go in my warehouse and see that chocolate bars contain very little trans fats. I can check a bag of chips, almost any one of them, and they contain no trans fats. Most cookies now are trans fat-free.

There are companies out there—and the Lunch Lady alluded to the success of her company. I believe she deals with the elementary group of students, and that has come out very well. But for high schools, these are their

options in vending machines and this is not something that's set in stone. There are a lot of healthier options out there and you have listed them all in policy 135 for the elementary school program—products that they can have. All of that is good, healthy—it tastes great—food. What we're seeing now is that the chocolate bars, chips and cookies have little or no nutritional value, and these ingredients cause obesity, heart disease, diabetes, all of the stuff we've heard today.

How can we, as caring adults and parents, change this? I am here in both capacities, addressing you, who are people of influence, in the hope that together we can become a driving force in taking the educated approach to reversing the thought process within the high schools that “junk food sells and we need the revenue.” My research has revealed that this is the mantra constantly stated in our schools and, in many cases, it's the head of our physical education department who is saying it. The exact same commission structure can be applied to healthier-option products. I know it. I'm doing it in other areas.

We need to ensure that the availability of healthy foods is found in our cafeterias and vending machines in a learning environment. Students do need ongoing education in the importance of proper nutrition. Our children and youth deserve the very best possible fuel to energize a learning mind and they rely on us, as their peers, to give it to them. Further research indicates that teaching staff are on board with these healthy initiatives and have stated that a lot of learning disabilities—children who eat high-sugar, high-fat product, are bouncing off the walls in the afternoon and virtually uncontrollable, let alone teachable, because of poor food intake during the earlier part of the day.

Healthy body focus is three meals a day and two healthy snacks to maintain a proper metabolism. Cafeterias often close at 2 o'clock, and healthy vending choices should be available to bridge the gap, to offset the crash-and-burn effect. Cafeteria contracts often hold the total food concession proviso. Often, they do not wish to provide vending, but the door is closed to other companies wishing to provide the service because the contract is tied up. Initiatives are already in effect in BC and Nova Scotia.

Directives that we've taken as Food Sense to date: Food Sense has been a recipient of the Impact Award for innovation in sales and initiative; we are participants in special initiatives with the Durham region health department; we are participants in a pilot project for the Eat Smart program; and we are participants with Variety Village and the Healthy Buddies program.

Vending does have a key role to play here. It can be just as fun and just as tasty as what we're offering the kids now. I continue to work with one of my customers, Buffet Taylor, the health and wellness specialists; Durham Indoor Soccer Centre; and a community centre in Scugog—they've gone healthy in their vending. We deal with corporate fitness programs, the town of Whitby and

fitness facilities. I continue to work to try and bring in healthier choices eating to the school.

Food Sense has a structured petition on their website—it's in your package—for parents wishing to advocate for healthy vending in schools, community centres and arenas. We are an advocate for healthy vending in Ontario. The drive towards this cause will continue until the results are achieved.

Yes, I'm the owner of Food Sense, and yes, I'd like to supply the schools. But that's not why I'm here. I'm here today as a proactive and caring parent to advocate towards a movement of good nutrition in schools. I'm here to gain attention for the injustice being done to our children, who cannot speak for themselves.

What you're doing is a positive step not only for our students but also for the future of Ontario and for the Ontario health care system. I hope that you will drive the legislation to more fully encompass the mandate towards truly healthy eating, and an act has to ensure this. This will prevent those in positions of authority from stepping in with the weak statements, “Junk food sells and we need the revenue,” thereby preventing this much-needed change from taking place within our schools.

Thank you for the opportunity of allowing me to express my concerns. If in my capacity I can assist you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Cavalier. We have about a minute or so per side, beginning with the government.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much for your presentation. I take it that you're quite strongly in support of the fact that Bill 8 takes the elementary junk food ban in vending machines and extends that to secondary vending machines and then also will eventually provide broader nutritional guidelines for food.

Just to let you know, we have specifically had the conversation about tuck shops. It would be our observation that what you are saying is often true: that tuck shops are a source of junk food. We know we have to make sure that the nutritional guidelines apply to tuck shops and that you can't end-run everything else with tuck shops. So we do understand that about the dynamic of secondary schools, just to give you some assurance there that we're on the same wavelength.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Ms. Scott?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much for appearing before us. Maybe elaborate a little bit: The vending machines that you do supply, and the programs, for example; what do they offer?

Ms. Maggie Cavalier: It just depends on where you are. If it was a school it would be yogurts, puddings. They have cheese. You can do the baked product instead of fried. You can do cereal bars. All the stuff you have listed in policy 135 is applicable in a high school vending machine. They've done it in PEI—and I'm afraid I forgot to put it in with your brochure. Students did this in PEI. They did it over the summer. It was a high school—not a problem—amazing, and they do exactly the same thing I do.

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The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Maggie, Ms. Sandals just said that we have banned or we're banning junk food. That's what I think I heard her say.

Ms. Maggie Cavalier: Yes, I heard that too, but I know you aren't.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's what I wanted you to comment on, because that's what's on the record. When I read the bill, it says that it "adds a requirement for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutritional standards set out in regulations." Then I was going to ask you: Does that sound like a ban on junk food?

Ms. Maggie Cavalier: No, it's not a ban. Actually, if you're reducing trans fats, you're allowing them to have everything they have now, except maybe french fries fried in a certain oil in high schools. Potato chips have no trans fats. Most cookies have no trans fats.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Have you completed, Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I did.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Cavalier.

DIETITIANS OF CANADA

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I'd now invite our final presenter for the day, Ms. Leslie Whittington-Carter of the Dietitians of Canada, and colleague. Please do introduce yourselves for the public record, and I'd invite you to begin now.

Ms. Linda Dietrich: Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here. Unfortunately, Leslie is unable to attend. I'm Linda Dietrich and I'm the regional executive director for Dietitians of Canada for the Ontario region. With me is Lynn Roblin. Lynn will introduce herself.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: I'm Lynn Roblin. I'm here as a member of Dietitians of Canada. I work with Linda Dietrich and Carol Dombrow, whom you've heard speak before on the school nutrition guidelines for vending machines that we did in 2004. That's just a bit of background.

Ms. Linda Dietrich: Nutrition is a key factor in maintaining health. Dietitians of Canada supports initiatives that increase access to healthy foods in schools. Food at school is a key contributor to children's nutritional intake. DC supports the provision of healthier food choices for all foods sold and served in school.

DC encourages the government to develop comprehensive food policies for schools, along with implementation guidelines that consider the roles of and impact on all stakeholders, including parents, children, teachers, school administrators, public health personnel, as well as the food industry.

Dietitians of Canada represents almost 6,000 dietitians across Canada, and there are over 2,800 registered dietitians in Ontario, whose knowledge and expertise support people in health and illness to make healthy food

choices. DC is committed to promoting the health and well-being of consumers through food and nutrition.

Lynn will now address some of the specifics around schools.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Regarding school nutrition and its impact on children and adolescents, you've heard a lot of background already today, so I'm just going to go briefly over some of the points that we have included in our report, of which I believe you did receive a copy earlier, and if not, we'll make sure you get a copy.

First off, we all recognize that children spend a significant part of their day at school, and the food choices they get there do have an impact on their health. When only nutritionally adequate or poor food choices are available every day, it is difficult for students to make a healthy choice.

We know that inadequate nutrition can have a detrimental effect on children's learning as well as their physical growth and development. Well-nourished children are more prepared to learn and have the energy they need to carry out their daily and physical activities.

Poor food choices and eating habits are contributing to the rising rate of childhood and adolescent obesity and type 2 diabetes. These poor eating habits can go on into adulthood and increase the risk of chronic diseases. This is increasing our health care costs, as we have heard previously.

We are concerned here in Ontario about the rising childhood obesity rates. Our average in Ontario is actually 1% above the national average in terms of children ages two- to 17 all being overweight or obese.

We do feel that schools can play a powerful role in influencing the food choices of children and youth. The development of food policies and guidelines for the types of food served in schools is a very important strategy to promote healthy choices among youth. We know that reforming the school nutrition policies and guidelines alone will not solve the mounting obesity problem. We require a multi-faceted, collaborative approach to promote healthy eating environments at school, and you've heard some of that from Mary Ellen's presentation from the Call to Action.

This means that we require supportive curriculum, role models for healthy eating and the availability of healthy foods for all activities, including foods served for meals, snacks, vending machines, tuck shops, cafes, for fundraising and special event days. Schools, we feel, need to practise what they teach the students in the curriculum and reinforce what's being taught in the classroom about nutrition.

In my role as a nutrition consultant and parent of four kids—two are still in the high school system and two have graduated—I have worked with a number of schools on parent councils and see that we can make improvements to the food choices for our children at school. We've seen switching from doughnuts to fruit kebabs. We've seen chicken and tuna salad wraps, instead of hot dogs for hot dog days, served in cafés. Unfortunately, the tuck shops seem to be the last area of our control. From

experience, I was waiting for my daughter in the high school the other day and peeked in their tuck shop. The only healthy choice there was water. Everything else was chips, candy bars and sodas. So that is an area that we still require a lot of attention in.

In terms of Dietitians of Canada's opinion regarding Bill 8, we do commend the Ontario government for initiating this bill. Implementation of consistent policies across the province will have a powerful impact on improving the choices for children at school, regarding their food choices. Initiating a policy that limits the trans fat in foods or beverages offered for sale to pupils in a cafeteria or school is just one step, along with the 2004 school vending machine policy, to providing a healthy, supportive eating environment.

DC, however, is concerned that focusing solely on trans fat and excluding special events days will not solve the problem of access to nutritionally poor food choices at school. We believe that a more comprehensive school policy is required that promotes the tenets of eating well with Canada's Food Guide, emphasizing increased fruit and vegetable consumption and reducing sodium, sugar and total fat.

We have a number of recommendations coming from Dietitians of Canada:

—that a more comprehensive provincial food policy is necessary to ensure that healthier food and beverages are sold and served in Ontario schools;

—that the school food policies apply to all foods and beverages sold and served in schools, not just those in cafeterias and vending machines, and foods used in snack and meal programs, special event days, tuck shops, cafés and for fundraising;

—that the comprehensive school food policy ensures that beverages and food sold and served in school follow the recommendations set out in Health Canada's food guide, Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. As a follow-up, the food guide does specifically recommend limiting foods that are high in calories, fat, sugar or salt. There are many examples of those that we've already heard about tonight;

—finally, that stakeholder consultation be used to develop more comprehensive food policies, and that Dietitians of Canada has members who have the knowledge and expertise to make a significant contribution to this process.

Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): We have the Conservative side, about 90 seconds or so per side.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much for appearing here today. We've had a lot of presentations, so with only such a short time, I'll just say thank you. I won't have direct questions, but we can follow up later.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If the government does not include any of your recommendations, how displeased would you be?

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Well, very. No, I think that—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Now, be frank. Don't hold back.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: We're moving along on a continuum of trying to promote healthier food choices and we'd be very disappointed if you didn't move ahead on promoting a more comprehensive school food policy.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Merci.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you. Bienvenue, mon ami. We have now the government side. Ms. Sandals.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I must phrase this question this way then, following my colleague over here: How happy would you be if we had a regulation "governing nutritional standards for food and beverages and for any ingredient contained in food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity"?

If we went there, would that make you happy?

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Yes.

Ms. Linda Dietrich: Very happy.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Okay, good. I'm reading from Bill 8, obviously.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Sandals, and thanks to you both, Ms. Roblin and Ms. Dietrich, for your presentation on behalf of the Dietitians of Canada.

For the information of committee members, legislative counsel is Catherine Oh, and is available, of course, for assistance for drafting of amendments. We won't be announcing this phone number publicly because then we'd have members of the public calling for the drafting of their amendments.

With that, if there's no further business, this committee stands adjourned until Monday, April 14, for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 8.

The committee adjourned at 1801.

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