

The Ottawa Principles

Context

The World Health Organization and health organizations worldwide are leading efforts to ensure children everywhere are protected against food and beverage marketing. Children are exposed to multiple forms of marketing as food and beverage companies spend billions of dollars targeting this group. Voluntary measures such as the Canadian Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative have proven to be ineffective in changing the overall marketing environment. As such, policies need to be put in place to protect children from food and beverage marketing.

In Canada, many non-governmental organizations have developed policy recommendations to address the negative health impacts of marketing food and beverages to children. A summary of the policy recommendations, which demonstrates the great deal of convergence amongst them, can be found [here](#).

In 2014, nationally-recognized health opinion leaders, health professional and researchers from across Canada came together to develop a consensus position on a set of definitions, scope and principles meant to guide "Marketing to Kids" (M2K) policy-making in Canada as follows:

Definitions and Scope

1. Marketing refers to any form of commercial communication or message that is designed to, or has the effect of, increasing the recognition, appeal and/or consumption of particular products and services. It comprises anything that acts to advertise or otherwise promote a product or service.¹
2. Restrictions would apply to all food and beverages.
3. Restrictions do not relate to non-commercial marketing for valid public health education or public awareness campaigns.
4. The age at which restrictions in marketing to children would apply should be 16 years and younger.

Policy Recommendation

Restrict the commercial marketing of all food and beverages to children and youth age 16 years and younger. Restrictions would include all forms of marketing with the exception of non-commercial marketing for public education. In addition, the regulations should fulfill the nine Ottawa principles:

The Ottawa Principles:

In Canada, policies and regulations to effectively protect children from commercial food and beverage marketing should:

- 1. AFFORD SUBSTANTIAL PROTECTION TO CHILDREN.** Children are particularly vulnerable to commercial marketing. Policies and regulations need to be sufficiently powerful to provide them with a high level of protection. Child protection is the responsibility of every sector of society – parents and guardians, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and government.

- 2. BE STATUTORY IN NATURE.** Only legally enforceable regulations have sufficient authority and power to ensure high-level protection of children from marketing and its persuasive influence over food preference and consumption. Industry self-regulation is not designed to achieve this goal and has proven insufficient.
- 3. TAKE A WIDE DEFINITION OF COMMERCIAL MARKETING.** Policies and regulations need to encompass a broad range of commercial targeting of children (e.g. television advertising, print, competitions, loyalty schemes, product placements, celebrity endorsements, financial inducements and incentives, relationship marketing, games, packaging, Internet) and be sufficiently flexible to include new marketing methods as they evolve.
- 4. RESTRICT THE COMMERCIAL MARKETING TO CHILDREN IN CHILD-FOCUSED SETTINGS.** Policies and regulations need to ensure that the commercial marketing to children (*the specific types to be determined*) is restricted in child-focused settings such as schools, childcare, early childhood education facilities, and sports and recreation centres.
- 5. TAKE ACTION TO MANAGE CROSS BORDER MEDIA.** Cross-border media or communication channels, such as Internet, satellite and cable television, and free-to-air television broadcast from neighbouring countries, should be managed wherever possible. This is not a pre-requisite for restrictions to be implemented.
- 6. BE EVALUATED, MONITORED, RESOURCED AND ENFORCED.** Policies and regulations need to be independently evaluated to ensure the expected effects are achieved, independently monitored to ensure compliance, and fully resourced and enforced.
- 7. BE IDENTIFIED AND ENACTED QUICKLY THROUGH A MULTI-GOVERNMENT APPROACH.** All levels of government are urged to take action, with a view to have full compliance, as soon as possible.
- 8. ENSURE GOVERNMENT IS A KEY STAKEHOLDER IN DEVELOPING POLICY.** Governments should provide leadership in setting the policy framework, while protecting the public interest and avoiding conflict of interest.
- 9. ENSURE GOVERNMENT SETS CLEAR POLICY DEFINITIONS.** The setting of clear definitions would facilitate uniform implementation and consistency, irrespective of the implementing body.

1. World Health Organization. *A Framework for Implementing the Set of Recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children*. Geneva: WHO; 2012 available at http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/80148/1/9789241503242_eng.pdf?ua=1
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