

Dear Mr. Rajotte:

I have recently been made aware of the extent to which artificial trans fats still exist in the Canadian food supply, especially among foods often consumed by children.

I urge the federal government to introduce regulations to limit these harmful fats.

We know that a high consumption of artificial trans fats leads to a 330 per cent increase in the risk of heart disease. We know that these fats are estimated to be responsible for thousands of cardiac deaths annually in Canada. Unlike salts or sugars, there are absolutely no health benefits to artificial trans fats – they are only bad for our health.

Although some progress has been made by some sectors of the food industry to voluntarily remove trans fats, other sectors are not taking action. Many foods are still riddled with disturbingly high levels of these fats.

As your constituent, I urge you to encourage the federal government to live up to its commitment and regulate deadly, heart-clogging trans fats – for the sake of our children and all Canadians.

Sincerely,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ottawa

Justice Building, Room 406
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Tel: (613) 992-3594
Fax: (613) 992-3616
Email: rajotj@parl.gc.ca

Constituency

204-596 Riverbend Square
Edmonton, Alberta
T6R 2E3
Tel: (780) 495-4351
Fax: (780) 495-4485
Email: rajotj|@parl.gc.ca

James Rajotte, MP

Edmonton—Leduc

Dear Constituent:

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding trans fats in the Canadian food supply.

As you mentioned in your correspondence, the consumption of trans fats can increase the risk of heart disease and other medical conditions. In November 2004, a motion on the replacement of processed trans fats in the Canadian food supply was introduced in the House of Commons. Health Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada committed to work, through a multi-stakeholder Trans Fat Task Force, to develop recommendations and strategies for reducing trans fats in Canadian foods to the lowest level possible.

In June 2007, the Minister of Health announced that Health Canada had adopted the recommendations of the Task Force with respect to the amount of trans fat in foods. These recommendations from the Trans Fat Task Force were two-fold:

- 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.

The Minister called on the food industry to achieve these limits within two years. In doing so, companies and food manufacturers are encouraged to replace trans fats with healthier alternatives, such as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, and to not replace trans fats with saturated fats. To ensure that the industry is making progress in meeting the 2% and 5% limits, Health Canada closely monitors the actions of the industry via the Trans Fat Monitoring Program.

The Trans Fat Monitoring Program has been analyzing a wide variety of foods from restaurants, fast food chains, quick service restaurants, cafeterias located in institutions, establishments serving various ethnic cuisines, as well as pre-packaged foods. The results from the fourth set of monitoring data, dated December 2009, are presented in data tables that include information on the total fat, the trans fat, and the saturated fat levels in foods. Canada is the first country to publish this type of data, and it can be accessed online at: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/gras-trans-fats/tfa-age_four-data_quatr-donn-eng.php.

The fourth set of monitoring data continues to indicate that the nutrition labelling regulations are an effective motivator for industry to reformulate their products, as many food manufacturers have reduced the trans fat content of their products to meet the 5% limit. Currently, the department is analyzing the impact of the two year monitoring program on the average trans fat intake of Canadians to determine what the best approach would be to reach the targets recommended by the Trans Fat Task Force. Moving forward, Health Canada will continue to engage stakeholders in further discussions.

While Canadians have reduced their total fat intake over the last two decades, experts maintain that we are still consuming too much saturated and trans fat. Each of us can personally reduce the risks associated with trans fat consumption by choosing healthier foods that contain little or no trans fat. To help Canadians better understand nutritional information on various food products, Health Canada has created a tool called the Interactive Nutrition Label. By exploring this interactive tool, you can learn how to use nutrition information to make more informed choices about the foods you buy. This tool can be accessed online at: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/cons/inl_main-eng.php.

Following Canada's Food Guide can also help you make healthy food choices. It can be viewed at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>. I encourage you to take advantage of these helpful tools at your convenience.

Thank you again for taking the time to share your concerns with me; I hope that the information I have provided is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future should you have any further questions or concerns.

Yours truly,

James Rajotte, MP
Edmonton-Leduc