

**PRESS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

*Standing Committee on Health*

## **The Weight Coalition recommends diminishing the drawing power of soft and energy drinks**

---

**Ottawa, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011** – Appearing before the Standing Committee on Health, as part of the theme of study *Healthy Living*, the Quebec Coalition on Weight-Related Problems (Weight Coalition) is proposing concrete actions to federal MPs to modify soft and energy drinks consumption habits. The Weight Coalition voices the growing consensus in regards to the need to ensure a more efficient regulation of these products, which are blamed among others, by the World Health Organization.

“The obesity epidemic is as much a public health problem as a public finance problem. Those two reasons by themselves justify the attention of our elected officials in regards to soft and energy drinks,” explains Suzie Pellerin, Director of the Weight Coalition. For that matter, the Society of Actuaries estimated last December that the costs of the obesity epidemic in Canada had reached \$30 billion annually, due for the most part to the additional care required and productivity losses.

The Weight Coalition is, thus, presenting four regulatory measures aiming to limit the impact on health of the worrying consumption of soft and energy drinks:

- **Strict regulation of packaging and products.** For example, last May, the federal government authorized the addition of caffeine in cola-free soft drinks, without requiring the mention of its quantity to consumers. Stricter regulation concerning product composition (particularly the amount of caffeine) and packaging (healthy claims and logos, calorie indication, etc.) would help avoid misleading the consumer.
- **Ban the sale of soft and energy drinks in federal jurisdiction buildings.** This measure, already in place in many Quebec public buildings, could be easily implemented; Quebec experience shows that soft and energy drinks may indeed be advantageously replaced by healthier products.
- **Regulating food marketing directed at children.** Soft and energy drink producers do not haggle when it comes to the means used for promoting their products; the World Health Organization has invited its Member States to step in and help in restricting the promotion of products of low nutritional value. In this regard, Canadian legislative powers could draw inspiration from the principles presented in Quebec’s *Consumer Protection Act*. The Weight Coalition also encourages Canada to clearly indicate its intentions regarding marketing at the next United Nations Summit in New York next September.
- **Implement a tax on soft and energy drinks.** Implementing a tax on soft and energy drinks would constitute an eloquent gesture in favour of healthy lifestyles. Should such a tax take the form of an excise tax of one cent per litre, it would generate revenues of \$36 million for Canada, which could be reinvested in health promotion.

“Through these recommendations, we wish to show the Government of Canada that it can, like the Quebec government and other Canadian provinces, act immediately with respect to the obesity epidemic by stepping in particularly concerning soft and energy drinks, known for their significant contribution to this epidemic”, concludes Suzie Pellerin, Director of the Weight Coalition.

**About the Quebec Coalition on Weight-Related Problems**

Created in 2006 and sponsored by the Association pour la santé publique du Québec since 2008, the Quebec Coalition on Weight-Related Problems is working toward the adoption of specific public policies in regard to weight related issues. It acts within three strategic areas (agri-food industry, sociocultural and built environment) to foster the development of environments that enable healthy choices and prevent weight related issues. For more details [www.cqpp.qc.ca](http://www.cqpp.qc.ca).

– 30 –

**Source:** Amélie Desrosiers  
Communications Officer, Quebec Coalition on Weight-Related Problems  
Telephone: 514 598-8058 ext. 233  
Cell phone: 514 475-7431  
[adesrosiers@cqpp.qc.ca](mailto:adesrosiers@cqpp.qc.ca)

**To contact Suzie Pellerin, director of the Weight Coalition:**  
Cell phone: 514 235-3766