



Expel Trans. Expose Calories.



British Columbia, New York City, the state of California, and several other jurisdictions have banned partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs) in restaurants. Now there's a chance it could happen in Ontario.

In April 2009, with support from the Centre for Science in the Public Interest (publisher of *Nutrition Action*) and other groups, MPP France Gelinias (Nickel Belt; NDP) corralled enough votes to pass Bill 156 in the Ontario legislature. The bill would ban trans-fat-laden PHOs and require restaurant chains to list calories beside items on menus.

Clearing this first legislative hurdle is great news for Ontario restaurant-goers, but opponents could still deep-six the bill.

The trans fat battle isn't new. In 2006, the federal government set up a Trans Fat Task Force. (CSPI's national coordinator, Bill Jeffery, was a member.) The Task Force called for limits on trans fats in the entire food supply.

Why limits? Because in 2007, for example:

- Health Canada pegged average trans fat intake at 5 grams per person per day, 2½ times what the World Health Organization (WHO) considers safe.
- Many restaurant foods contained up to 11 times more trans than then-federal Minister of Health Tony Clement considered acceptable.
- Judging from U.S. Food and Drug Administration data, trans fat likely caused more than 2,600 heart attack and stroke deaths in Canada.

In June 2007, Minister Clement challenged the food industry to rein in trans fats by June 2009 or face a ban. Although many foods have shed their trans, others haven't.

As of this writing, Health Canada still hasn't cracked down.

As for calorie labelling on menus: Restaurants enjoy the biggest undeserved exemption from the federal nutrition-labelling rules, even though studies show that consumers are lousy at estimating the calories, fat, and sodium levels in restaurant food.

Who would guess, for instance, that a healthy-sounding Tim Hortons Wheat Carrot Muffin has nearly double the calories of a

Maple Dip Donut (400 versus 210)? Yet in 2007, not one of the 136 restaurants (from 27 different chains) that we visited provided nutrition facts on menus, where consumers can best use the information.

Until new federal Minister of Health Leona Aglukkaq steps up to the plate, provincial governments—which foot the lion's share of the health care bills—should adopt sensible initiatives like Bill 156 instead of caving in to industry pressure. The sooner calories appear on menus and trans fat disappears from kitchens, the better off we—and our pocketbooks—will be.



New York restaurants (like this Subway) must list calories on the menu board. Why not restaurants in Canada?

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Visit www.cspinet.ca and follow the link to urge your MPP and Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care David Caplan to ensure speedy passage of Bill 156. Better still, also call your MPP. Contact information for Ontario MPPs is at www.ontla.on.ca. To contact any Canadian federal or provincial legislator, call 1-800-O-CANADA (622-6232).

The contents of NAH are not intended to provide medical advice, which should be obtained from a qualified health professional. Design and production by The Page Group (www.pagegroup.com).

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