

# ***TRANSforming the Food Supply***

***A Case Study in Trans Fat  
Advocacy***

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Presentation to CSPI Conference  
October 26, 2010



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# Presentation Objectives

## Review:

- ❑ NGO efforts related to the implementation of federal trans fat regulations
- ❑ Outcomes
- ❑ Barriers
- ❑ Where to next?
  - the case for regulations



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# Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

- ❑ A national volunteer-based charity led and supported by a force of more than 130,000 volunteers.
- ❑ Leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy.
- ❑ A leading funder of heart and stroke research in Canada – investing approximately \$66 million annually into peer-reviewed research in Canada - funding over 900 researchers and research teams across the country. Since it was established in 1956, the Foundation has invested over \$1 billion in research support.



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# Trans Fats: What are they?

## Two Types

- ❑ **Naturally** occurring trans fats are derived from meat and dairy products
  - Represent approximately 10% of all trans fats consumed in Canada.
  - Levels range from 1-8% of total fat.
  - Very difficult, if not impossible to remove from the food supply.
  - Evidence regarding impact on health is inconclusive.
- ❑ **Industrially** produced or processed trans fats result from process of partial hydrogenation of oils
  - Represent approximately **90%** of all trans fats consumed in Canada.
  - Levels range from 1-45% of total fat in retail and restaurant foods
  - Introduced in earnest in the 1980s as a means of reducing health impact of saturated fats and to extend the shelf life and texture of foods.
  - Have absolutely no nutritional value.
  - Evidence regarding impact on health is highly negative and very conclusive



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# Evidence of Health Risk from Trans Fat

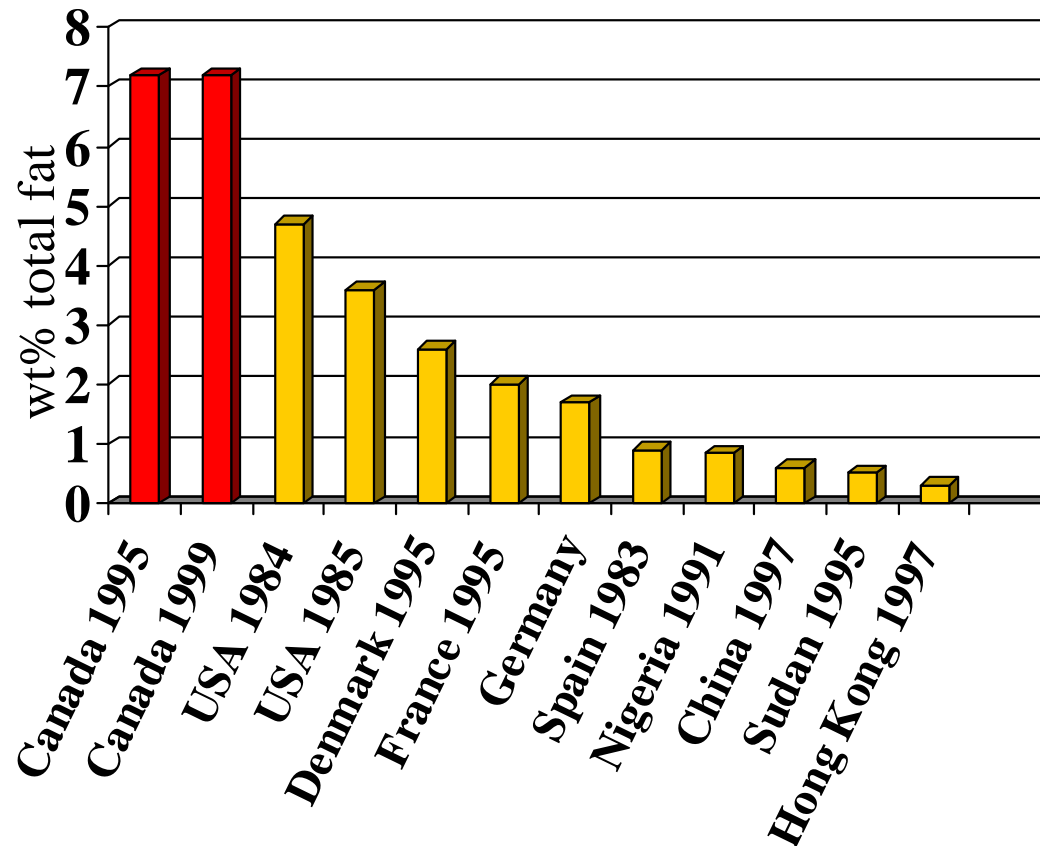
- **High consumption of trans fats leads to threefold (3.3 times) increase in risk of heart disease**
  - *Harvard School of Public Health, November 14, 2006.*
- **Trans fats pose 5-6 times higher risk of ischemic heart disease per gram than saturated fats**
  - *(Dr. Steen Stender, presentation before Trans Fat Task Force, November 2, 2005).*
- **If trans fats were replaced with healthier alternatives, thousands of cardiac deaths a year would be averted in Canada.**
  - *Estimates based on Harvard School of Public Health data.*



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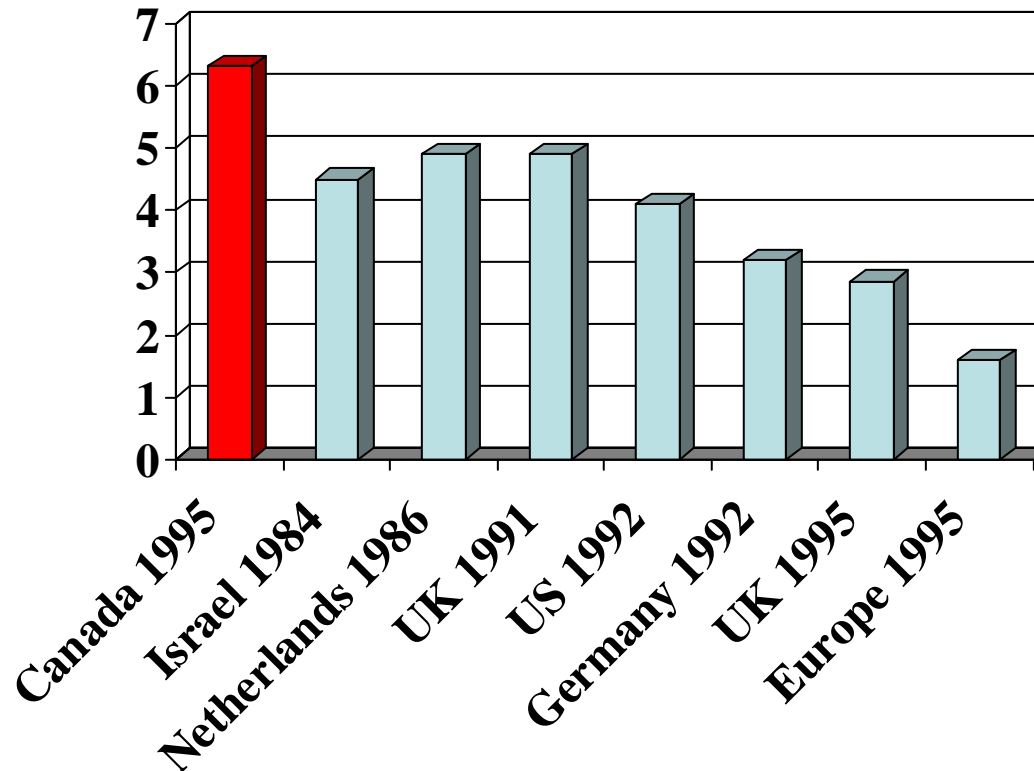
# Trans-fatty acid content of human milk samples from various countries



Canada 1995: 198 samples collected from all 9 provinces of Canada (Ratnayake Lipids '95)

Canada 1999: 103 samples from BC (Innis AJCN '99)

# Trans fatty acid content in human adipose tissue samples from various countries



Canadian data: Chen, Ratnayake et al. Can J Physiol Pharmacol., 1995

(adipose tissue samples from 12 students from Queen's University)

# Trans Fat Task Force Report broadly supported

- ❑ Motion passed in House of Commons November 2004 called on Health Canada and the HSFC to co-chair a multi-stakeholder task force to examine trans fat elimination/reduction.
- ❑ Trans Fat Task Force struck early 2005
- ❑ Report submitted June 2006, recommendations:
  - 2% trans fat limit in frying oils
  - 5% trans fat limit in other foods
- ❑ Industry is supportive of federal action:
  - Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association
  - Food and Consumer Products of Canada
  - Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
  - Baking Association of Canada



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# Trans Fat Task Force Report broadly supported

- ❑ House of Commons Standing Committee on Health recommended implementation of Trans Fat Task Force report in its report on childhood obesity, *“Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids”* (March 2007).
- ❑ Strong public acceptance (60-84% supportive).



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# Two Year Voluntary Reduction Period

- ❑ In June 2007, Health Minister Tony Clement:
  - gave the food industry two years to reduce trans fat in their foods
  - committed the government to monitoring trans fat levels in Canadian food supply every six months
  - committed that government would introduce regulations to virtually eliminate processed trans fats if progress was unsatisfactory.
- ❑ December, 2009 - the fourth and final set of trans fat monitoring results released.



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# Advocacy Tools/Activities

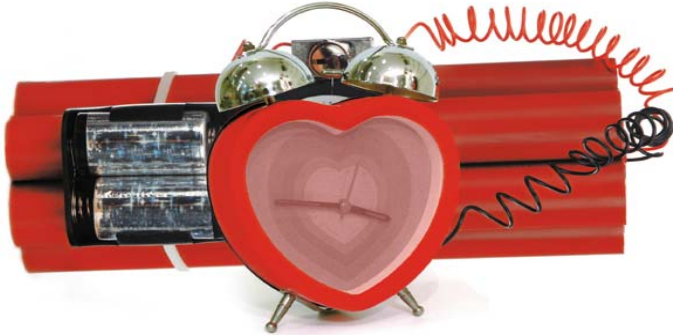
- ❑ Meetings & information sessions for MPs, political staff, other officials
- ❑ Appearances before parliamentary health committee
- ❑ Press conferences/press releases
- ❑ Outreach to industry
- ❑ E-advocacy campaign:
  - 4,000 e-mails to Minister of Health, cc PM
  - 2,000 e-mails to MPs from local constituents



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# Hill Times Ads



## The Clock is Ticking...

Canadians are among the leading consumers of processed trans fats in the world. Processed trans fats were artificially introduced into our food supply in earnest during the 1980s – resulting in thousands of heart attacks annually.

That's why a broad cross section of individuals from health groups, consumer organizations, food producers, manufacturers and food service operators, all jointly agreed in last June's national Trans Fat Task Force Report that processed trans fats should be removed from our food.

All of the Task Force members agreed that it CAN and SHOULD be done.

By acting on this report, the federal government can prevent thousands of heart attacks each year in Canada.

The clock is ticking. We urge the government to take action now.



Canadian  
Cardiovascular  
Society  
*Leadership. Knowledge. Community.*



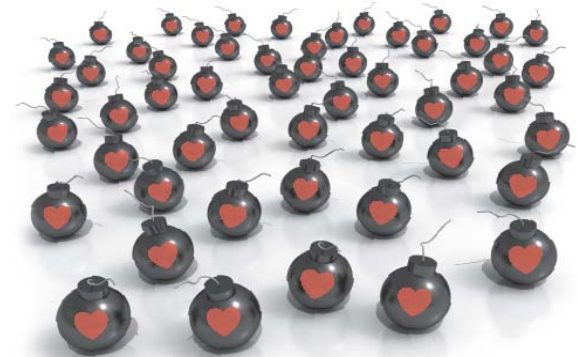
Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses



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[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



## Trans fats - a bomb waiting to blow

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Canadian Association of Cardiac Rehabilitation | Canadian Cancer Society | Canadian Cardiovascular Society  
Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses | Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition | Canadian Medical Association  
Canadian Nurses Association | Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada | Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



June 28<sup>th</sup> is the one year anniversary of the release of the Trans Fat Task Force report.

We are still waiting for the federal government's response to this consensus report.

We ask the government to please give Canadians a birthday gift - **implement the report!**



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# Leaflets for Parliamentarians



Processed trans fats were artificially produced in the 1970s and 1980s to preserve foods and improve texture.

We **didn't know then** that they can lead to a threefold increase in the risk of heart disease.

**Now we know** that processed trans fats kill.

**Canadians want** the federal government to implement the recommendations of the Trans Fat Task Force and remove this artificially created toxin from our food.

This will save lives!



[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



## Top 10 Reasons Why the Federal Government Should Implement Its Trans Fat Task Force Report

Last June the national Trans Fat Task Force released its final report entitled **TRANS**forming the Food Supply. It called for regulated reductions in the levels of harmful processed trans fats. The report, over one and half years in the making, represented the collective view of individuals from the food industry, academia, health agencies, consumer groups and four federal departments.

Here are 10 reasons why the federal government needs to act **NOW** on these recommendations:

- 1) Trans fats kill**
  - High consumption of processed trans fats leads to a threefold increase in the risk of developing heart disease.
  - Trans fats are responsible for an estimated 30,000 cardiac deaths every decade in Canada.<sup>1</sup>
  - The evidence is clear: no one questions the harmful effects of processed trans fats.
- 2) Canadians are some of the highest consumers of trans fats in the world**
  - Canadians consume, on average, a whopping 4.9 grams of trans fats daily.
- 3) Regulations work**
  - Trans fats have recently been reduced in some foods, but only where they have been relatively easy to remove. Many foods remain alarmingly high in processed trans fats.
  - Food labelling had to be regulated as voluntary compliance did not work.
  - Food labelling regulations are not enough because they do not apply to food service establishments, where processed trans fats can be high. In Canada 40% of expenditures on food are spent at foodservice establishments.<sup>2</sup>
  - Denmark and New York City have removed processed trans fats through regulations.
  - Without regulations, Canada will not be able to meet the World Health Organization's recommended levels for trans fat reduction.
  - We've regulated to protect the health of Canadians before – taking lead out of paint and requiring the use of seat belts – so why not remove processed trans fats?
- 4) Low income persons are disadvantaged**
  - Some foods that have reduced levels of trans fats are currently more expensive than similar foods that contain high levels of trans fats – this reduces accessibility to healthier food for low income people.
  - Regulations would bring the average price of trans fat-free food down significantly across the board.
- 5) Regulations will speed the production of healthier alternatives**
  - Regulations will provide a strong incentive for producers to expedite the development of alternatives to trans fats that are free of unhealthy saturated fats.
- 6) Canadian agriculture industry could gain a competitive advantage**
  - Significant opportunity for Canadian canola exports exists, particularly in Europe.
  - The Canadian Canola Council has confirmed that regulations will not have a negative impact on their sector.<sup>3</sup>
- 7) It is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure the safety of our food supply**
  - Protecting the safety of our food supply is an uncommitted area of jurisdiction, within the health system, for the federal government.
- 8) There are absolutely no nutritional benefits from processed trans fats**
  - Processed trans fats have no intrinsic health value other than to provide calories.
  - As a result of the above, the US Institute of Medicine recommends that the intake of trans fats should be as low as possible.
  - Processed trans fats are toxins and should be regulated like toxins in our environment.
- 9) Regulations will level the playing field for businesses**
  - Unlike the day-by-day approach in the US, which currently only proposes to regulate processed trans fats in restaurants – the Trans Fat Task Force report recommends the regulation of processed trans fats sold at retail as well – thus providing a level playing field for businesses.
- 10) It is the right thing to do**
  - Regulations will help prevent heart attacks, thereby reducing cardiovascular-related wait times and treatment costs. This is consistent with the goals of the government's recent commitment for the development of a Heart Health Strategy.

1. Harvard School of Public Health, November 14, 2006

2. Estimates based on Harvard School of Public Health data

3. Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, "Foodservice Facts: 2009", 2006

4. Ms. Barbara Irsani, appearing on behalf of the Canadian Canola Council before the Standing Committee on Health Childhood Obesity hearings, November 2, 2006.

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[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



June 2009 was the two year anniversary of the trans fat "voluntary reduction period". The verdict is in - regulations are urgently required.



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[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)

Dear Minister Leona Aglukkaq:

Processed trans fats were artificially produced in the 1970s and 1980s to preserve foods and improve texture. We didn't know then that they can lead to a threefold increase in the risk of heart disease. Now we know that processed trans fats kill. Thousands of Canadian lives could be saved if processed trans fats were replaced with healthier alternatives.

In response to the Trans Fat Task Force report, former Health Minister Tony Clement gave the food industry two years to voluntarily reduce processed trans fats. He vowed to regulate trans fat levels if the food industry actions to remove heart-clogging trans fats were unsatisfactory. Time has run out - the voluntary process has not worked.

HERE'S WHY WE NEED REGULATIONS NOW:

- 84% of Canadians support the removal of this artificially created substance from our food.
- Removing trans fats does not mean banning foods – it simply means replacing trans fats with healthier ingredients.
- The provincial and municipal approaches, although very much preferable to federal inaction:
  - Include only restaurants, and not retail/ store bought foods.
  - Do not provide an even playing field for businesses, putting restaurants at a disadvantage with the retail food industry.
- Trans fat regulations will help prevent heart attacks, thus reducing cardiovascular treatment wait times and costs.
- Many trans fats are still found in foods often consumed by children, such as cookies, cakes, donuts & brownies.

Minister, you helped protect our children from tobacco industry products by successfully championing Bill C-32. Now please help us protect the heart-health of our children by championing federal regulations to remove deadly, heart-clogging trans fats from our food.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAGE  
FREE

Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, PC, MP

Minister of Health

House of Commons

Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

# Intense Media Coverage: Trans Fats in the News

NATIONAL POST

Targeting  
Trans  
fats



Task force formed to  
determine trans fat  
limits



Canada to  
Limit  
Trans-fat in  
Food Products

CBC Health & Science News

French fry maker  
to Drop  
trans fat

# Trans Fats in the News

**The Gazette**

Trans fat ban  
is reasonable

**GLOBEANDMAIL.COM**

The future  
of trans fats

**OTTAWA CITIZEN**

Big fat intrusion  
on the menu

**REUTERS FOUNDATION**  **AlertNet**

(UK) Canada's  
lawmakers  
back call for  
trans-fat limits

# MPs vote to 'eliminate' trans fats

Government has 1 year to introduce rules to ban the cholesterol-raising fats from foods

BY JOE PARASKEVAS

Members of Parliament voted yesterday to ban artificial trans fats despite charges such action would be heavy-handed and "assault the entire food industry" by taking on such favourite foods as store-bought doughnuts and

even home-baked goods.

Most MPs, including Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh, rejected such suggestions and voted 193-73 to give the government one year to introduce either new rules or new legislation that "effectively eliminates" trans fatty acids, the cholesterol-raising

fats that have been linked to heart disease.

"We're calling it an absolute victory," said Pat Martin, the NDP MP who sponsored the motion. "We will be here to make sure we see this through."

Mr. Dosanjh said he would honour the motion that could

make Canada the second country in the world — after Denmark — to ban trans fats.

Some trans fatty acids occur naturally in beef and dairy products, but are also produced artificially in hydrogenated oils and are known to raise blood levels of bad cholesterol. They are in

most processed foods, like cookies, frozen pizza, peanut butter and cereals. A ban would force food manufacturers, including foreign importers, to eliminate the trans fats or remove their products from Canadian shelves.

The government last week announced it was setting up a task

force to recommend ways the federal government can reduce trans fats "to the lowest levels possible." The task force will include representatives from the food industry, academia and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

See NEWS on PAGE A10

## Parliament votes to take on trans fats

### INDUSTRY 'SUPPORTS INTENT'

NDP-sponsored bill pushes government closer to ban

BY JOE PARASKEVAS

OTTAWA — Members of Parliament voted yesterday to set Canada on a path to banning artificial trans fats despite charges such action would be heavy-handed and "assault the entire food industry" by taking on such favourite foods as store-bought doughnuts and even home-baked goods.

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The government last week announced it was setting up a task force to recommend ways Ottawa can reduce trans fats "to the lowest levels possible."

The trans fat task force will include representatives from the food industry, academia and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

A trans fat ban could be one option, said

a spokesman for the Health Minister. MPs opposed to a ban argued Tuesday such a move represented excessive government interference in Canadians' lives.

"Today, the NDP are asking us to vote to protect Canadians, especially children," British Columbia Conservative MP

**'I WATCH [NDP MPs]  
INHALING DOUGHNUTS  
FASTER THAN ANYONE'**

Stockwell Day said in the House.

"What evil would they ban? Why, it is none other than the malicious trans fats which presently lurk on Tim Horton's shelves, in cracker boxes in grocery stores and in grandma's baking."

Mr. Day criticized NDP members for their own fondness for trans fats.

"I watch them at coffee breaks, inhaling cookies and doughnuts faster than anyone," he said.

Restaurant industry representatives, among others, have warned a sudden trans fat ban could force them to re-introduce substances, such as animal fats and palm oils, considered harmful even before the introduction of trans fats, just to maintain their products.

Officials from Health Canada have said a ban could cause disruptions among food suppliers because without trans fats the shelf life of products that contain them would be reduced.

But reaction to yesterday's vote from the food industry was reserved and even supportive.

A spokeswoman for the 17,500-member Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association said many industry efforts to reduce or eliminate trans fats are currently underway.

"CRFA fully supports the intent of the motion, which is to find ways to reduce

trans fat in Canadian food to the lowest level possible," said Jill Holroyd, a CRFA vice-president. "The only question for our industry really is when and how they can be removed in a responsible manner so that we are truly offering a healthy alternative to consumers."

Fast food outlet New York Fries has already eliminated trans fats, she said. Pizza company Pizza Pizza has removed trans fats in its pizza crusts, she added, and Harvey's is reducing trans fats by using sunflower oil.

Tim Horton's and sandwich giant Subway have for years offered items on their menu that are seen as being healthier for consumers.

A statement from hamburger giant McDonald's Canada said the company also has reduced trans fat levels in its cooking oil and it would work with government and industry to further cut out trans fats.

"We want to continue to be part of the consultation," said the statement.

Legislation already exists that would force producers of foods containing trans fats to label their products accordingly.

Labelling requirements would come into effect in 2006.

CanWest News Service

# Outcomes

- ❑ Canadians daily average trans fat consumption
  - 8.4 grams in mid-1990s
  - 3.4 grams at the end of the voluntary reduction period
- ❑ 75% of food products tested by Health Canada trans fat free



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# Outcomes

- ❑ 25% food products trans fat laden
  - Underestimate, as not all food products were captured, e.g., sauces, gravies, semi-prepared baked goods (frostings), pre-made pie crust.
  - Small & medium sized food service operators were not fully captured.
- ❑ Levels of trans fats still very high among foods often consumed by children, including baked goods.



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# Trans Fat Data – Feb 2009

Type of Product	Percentage of products above 5% Trans fat level*
Croissants	75%
Danishes	55%
Pies	64%
Tarts	33%
Cakes	57%
Brownies	50%
Donuts	67%**

\*Trans fats are listed as a percentage of total fat. In the case of trans fats, 5% or less implies significantly reduced harm.

# Municipal & Provincial Approaches

- ❑ Although municipal and provincial approaches are preferable to inaction, they:
  - Do not cover retail products, only restaurant foods.
- ❑ Federal approach is more comprehensive, i.e:
  - It covers both retail AND restaurants/foodservice – thus providing for a level playing field for businesses.
  - Would provide for uniform approach across the country
  - Would provide optimal public health benefits



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# BARRIERS?



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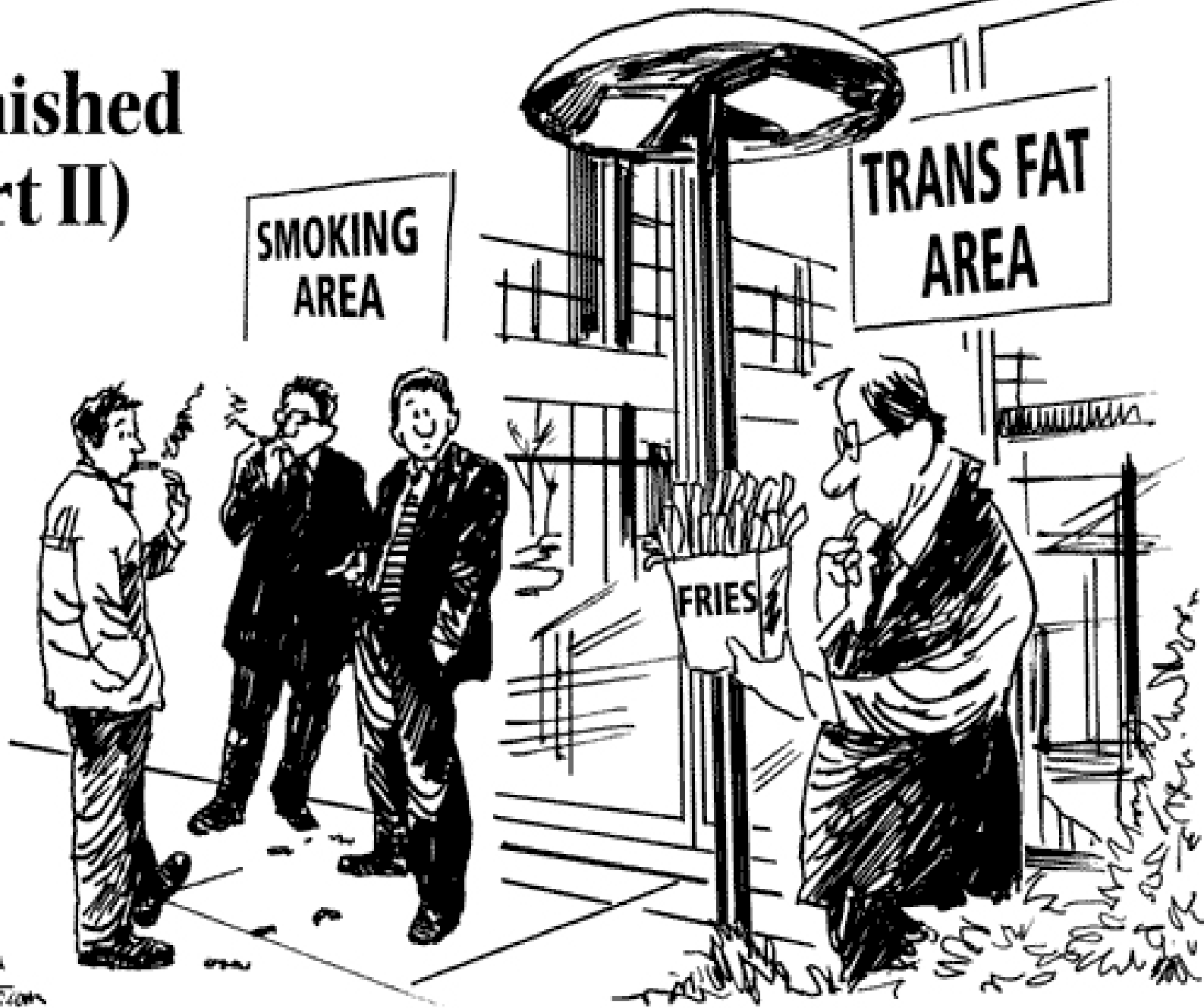
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NOW NOW...  
NANNY STATE  
WILL MAKE  
IT ALL  
BETTER.



# Banished (part II)



# Conservative Supporters can be Supportive of Trans Fat Regulations

## Environics Omnibus Survey Results

Sample Size (2002)  
May 18 – 26, 2010

Q: Federal government gave the food industry two years to voluntarily remove trans fats, committed to regulate if not fully successful. What's your view?

	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Bloc	All
Regulate	56	63	65	71	60
Not Regulate	41	36	32	29	38



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# Government & Opposition Positions on Trans Fat Regulations

Government – “All options are on the table/regulations are not off the table”.

Liberal – “Introduce strong new regulatory standards on trans fats.”

NDP - Supportive

Bloc - Supportive



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# The Case for Regulations?

1. Trans fats are still too prevalent, at least one-quarter of our food supply:
  - Especially among food products, including baked goods, that are often consumed by children – and even in some children’s hospitals.
2. Canadians are supportive of regulations.
3. Virtually no implementation costs for government.
4. No evidence that regulations are cost prohibitive for food industry.
5. Regulations do not involve the banning of any food – do not take deprive anyone of their freedom of choice.



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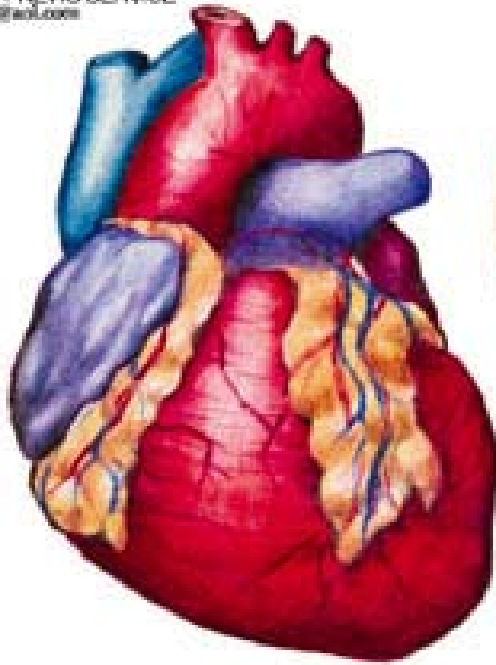
# The Case for Regulations

6. Federal regulations would level the playing field for the retail and foodservices sector.
7. Trans fats - unlike sodium - have no health benefits, only health risks.
8. Potential for backslide among industry is very real – especially if the perception takes hold that the issue has been forgotten.
9. The current government removed BPA from baby bottles and candy flavourings from tobacco/cigarillos.
10. Others have done it! Denmark & Switzerland have regulated. California doing it. British Columbia regulations came into effect Sept 30, 2009. Several US cities.



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**NIYY**

# Conclusions

- ❑ Comprehensive NGO efforts/campaign were instrumental in bringing about trans fat reductions – especially intense media coverage. But, they can only get you so far.
- ❑ Only regulations will get us across the finish line.
- ❑ Prior to 1970s, we managed without trans fats in our food, we can do so again.
- ❑ Trans fats were put in food to extend shelf life. Let's prioritize extending lives of our children and citizens instead!



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