

THE KIDS ARE NOT ALL RIGHT WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT THEY EAT

By Sylvain Charlebois
Professor
Dalhousie University

Most people would agree that protecting children should be our country's utmost priority. Protecting children from unhealthy food products and fast-food chains has been the subject of many conversations.

Ads for sugary food products geared towards children have been contested for years and some countries have opted to ban them, one way or another. The United Kingdom, the latest country to do so, banned TV advertising for food products high in fat, salt and sugar between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and 9 p.m.

In Canada, an attempt was made to regulate ads aimed at children. Bill S-228, known as the Child Health Protection Act, was introduced with the intention of restricting the marketing of food and beverage products high in salt, saturated fat and sugar to chil-

dren aged 12 years and younger. However, the bill never received further consideration by the federal government due to the 2019 election.

While Parliament hasn't done anything on the issue since, Health Canada has provided guidelines for industry to consider and is examining the new U.K. rules on advertising.

Meanwhile, our food industry recently released a Code for the Responsible Advertising of Food and Beverage Products to Children. A coalition that includes most major processors and restaurants in Canada chose not to wait for the federal government to regulate this advertising.

The announcement mentions that the code exceeds Health Canada's recommendations. Perhaps, but many Canadians are skeptical of self-regulating proposals from industry. When it comes to public health issues, Canadians tend to trust governments more than industry.

There's some science to not allowing marketing to persuade young consumers. Recent developments in neuroscience show that younger children's cognitive development prevents them from making rational decisions when watching advertising and can skew judgment on what products are desirable. And marketing is all about creating desires.

Many countries have recognized this and regulated industry and its marketing practices, including Mexico, Iran, Chile and several in Europe. According to Statistics Canada, nearly a third of Canadian children are overweight or obese, and the number of obese children may have gone up in recent months. COVID-19 lockdowns and continuing public safety measures have kept many children from organized sports and physical activities, putting a toll on their overall health.

This is one challenge regulators will have to keep in mind, whether they decide to regulate advertising to children or not.

But regulating advertising to children isn't as simple as you may think. First, television isn't how most children take in information these days. Internet streaming services and social media are the main vehicles used by many. Regulating anything on these platforms can be difficult.

In 1980, Quebec imposed a ban on advertisements for toys and food aimed at children under age 13 in print and electronic media. That ban has had mixed results since many people in Quebec watch media content broadcasted from outside the province. Also, food companies now advertise to older children, which makes the 13-year-old threshold difficult to implement in many social and commercial settings.

Bill C-10, aimed at updating Canada's Broadcasting Act would have given the federal government more power to regulate more popular internet streaming services, such as Amazon Prime, Disney+ and Netflix. Compliance would be expected of everyone, as it is now for traditional broadcasters such as CTV, Global and private radio stations.

Regulating the content of many media will be challenging, if not impossible. That's just the way it is today. And with a federal election looming, Bill C-10 may suffer the same fate as Bill S-228 and never see the light of day.

Beyond regulations, however, is one of the most powerful tools we have when it comes to promoting sound nutrition: education. Kids don't buy these products, their parents do. Given that children are highly vulnerable, parents should continue to act as gatekeepers of fridges and cupboards in their homes.

It's critical we don't let parents off the hook, especially now. Industry will always innovate and be ahead of policy and regulations aimed at banning certain practices. When it comes to food, our best defence is good, responsible parenting.

Over time, society gets to decide the rights and wrongs by asking governments to act. Food advertising aimed at children may be one of these cases. In the meantime, industry undoubtedly recognized we have a problem and released its code to limit advertising to children. We ought to give it a shot and see what happens over the next few years.

But the government should certainly put industry on notice. There's nothing more precious than our children.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois is senior director of the agri-food analytics lab and a professor in food distribution and policy at Dalhousie University.

RNAO WELCOMES PREMIER FORD TAKING IMPORTANT STEPS TO IMPLEMENT VACCINE CERTIFICATES

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) welcomes the Ontario government's vaccine certificate plan, declaring it an essential move to protect vaccinated persons and encourage vaccination among those who have yet to be fully immunized against the deadly COVID-19 virus and its variants. Ontario reported 656 new cases today and 13 more deaths (some of which occurred earlier). RNAO first raised the idea of a vaccine passport in May and has since discussed specifics with government officials, opposition parties and in the media. To press for action, RNAO's board of directors passed a motion on Aug. 5 calling for a mandatory passport and delineating the requirements to ensure broad applicability and address issues of equity, safety and the privacy of individuals.

Under the government's plan,

people will be required to show proof they have received both COVID-19 vaccinations before they can enter high-risk indoor public settings such as bars, casinos, gyms, theatres, and indoor dining at restaurants. It is not required for people who access personal care services such as salons and barber shops, retail stores and places of worship – something RNAO says is a missed opportunity – although the government's mandatory masking policy remains in place.

"As we have said on numerous occasions, nurses and health-care workers are exhausted. They have been battling the pandemic since March 2020 and there is no end in sight," says Dr. Doris Grinspun, RNAO CEO. "The vaccine certificate system announced today by Premier Ford is needed to encourage those who have yet to protect themselves fully and those

they come in contact with. It will also add a layer of protection to customers and allow businesses to operate safely. All of this is necessary to transition out of the pandemic. And for this, we thank the premier for changing course."

RNAO President Morgan Hoffarth commends the government for allowing an exemption to the vaccine requirement for medical reasons only (in addition to children under 12). "However, in this case, proof of a negative test should be required, in addition to the medical note specified in the government's announcement," insists Hoffarth.

As it rolls out its vaccine certificate plan, Hoffarth also cautions the government "to keep in mind that not everyone has access to the Internet or a cell phone. That's why the government must put a system in place that makes it

easy for people who are vaccinated to obtain proof of their vaccination status, while respecting people's privacy and security."

"It's well-known that this fourth wave of the pandemic is affecting mostly the unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. That's why a vaccine certificate plan needs to be in place. Such a plan will

increase the number of individuals who get immunized, while protecting children under 12 who cannot be immunized and others who are vulnerable, especially those over the age of 80," concludes Grinspun.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is the professional

association representing registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students in Ontario. Since 1925, RNAO has advocated for healthy public policy, promoted excellence in nursing practice, increased nurses' contribution to shaping the health system, and influenced decisions that affect nurses and the public they serve.

AS FOURTH WAVE ACCELERATES ONTARIANS URGED TO TAKE BACK CONTROL BY GETTING VACCINATED

"Ontario's COVID-19 case count is rising quickly, with hospitalizations and admissions to intensive care also on the increase. Uptake of vaccines, on the other hand, has slowed significantly. Without even higher rates of vaccination, the province's fourth wave of COVID-19 will accelerate and deepen through the fall and winter.

We have all struggled with uncertainty and made very difficult sacrifices during the pandemic. After a taste of normalcy this summer, no one wants to go backwards. But that is a possibility if a significant number of Ontarians choose to remain unvaccinated. People who are unvaccinated are placing themselves and others at direct risk. This is especially true for school children under the age of 12 who cannot yet be vaccinated. Given this risk, Ontario's children's hospitals are working with provincial authorities to ensure ongoing access to paediatric critical care services through the fall and winter. This planning complements their broader efforts to strengthen health services and supports for children during the pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccines have been proven safe and effective, with over five billion doses administered worldwide. In Ontario, over 90% of COVID-19 patients in intensive care and over 80% hospitalized but not in intensive care are not fully vaccinated. By increasing our vaccination rate, we can reduce the burden on hospitals and the people who work in them and minimize further disruption to hospital services unrelated to COVID-19.

Vaccines allow us to take back some of the control we've lost to COVID-19. Getting vaccinated is an active choice to protect ourselves, our loved ones, our communities and the exhausted health care workers who have already fought three waves of COVID-19. It is a conscious choice to steer our province away from strict public health measures towards a brighter and more predictable future.

On behalf of Ontario's hospitals, we are grateful to the millions of Ontarians who have already chosen to protect themselves and others. If you have not yet received both doses of vaccine, we urge you to do so as soon as possible and to reach out to your family physician if you have any questions or concerns. As we face another difficult fall and winter, our collective future will be determined by the sum of our individual choices."

- Anthony Dale, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association

NOW OPEN

Calm Surrender



*We like to share a story of a dream come true for services in the perfect time after a pandemic. We are opening **Calm Surrender** in Orono a metaphysical and energy healing boutique that offers an array of services and retail all relating to healing the mind body and soul. Much needed after going through a pandemic.*

Calm Surrender
5284 Main Street, Orono - 905-242-6328