

February 10th, 2011

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Members of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), I urge you to stick by your statement in your New Year's message to Canadians that salt-reduction is one of the major goals of the current government.

The actions of the Minister of Health Leona Aglukkaq puts this statement into question. Disbanding the Sodium Working Group in favour of an industry driven advisory committee with other responsibilities makes the goal an elusive hope. Public oversight and transparency are paramount to ensuring that sodium reduction strategies evolve in a timely manner. **Our members urge you to reinstate the Working Group without delay.**

It is widely held that sodium intake is the cause of death through stroke, hypertension and coronary heart disease. The task of reducing daily salt consumption of Canadians is critical and cannot be left to chance or to the vagaries of the producers of processed food and the self interest of the bottom line. Public monitoring of industry progress towards planned targets is absolutely necessary.

Recognizing that sodium intake has serious consequences for both individual Canadians and the Canadian Health System NCWC adopted the following policy in 2010:

DECREASING SODIUM CONSUMPTION BY CANADIANS

Resolved that the National Council of Women of Canada urge the Government of Canada to:

a) take all necessary measures to follow the recommendations of the Sodium Reduction Strategy which is to be published in 2010; and b) ensure that the Public Health Agency of Canada: i. provides leadership in educating Canadians of the dangers of excessive intake of sodium; and ii. develops a strategy and regulations for reduction of sodium in processed foods, and c) adopt a colour coding system to indicate the level of sodium in products.

Please advise what actions the government of Canada plans to take to address this important health issue.

Yours truly,

Mary Scott,
President, National Council of Women of Canada

CC The Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health
Ujjal Dosanjh, M.P., Health Critic, Liberal Party
Meghan Leslie, M.P., Health Critic, NDP