



***2019 Food Guide moves closer to evidence,  
but new fuzziness about optimum quantities of food and  
the permeability of industry firewalls hint that industry influence is still strong***

**MONTREAL/OTTAWA (January 22, 2019):** Bill Jeffery, Editor of *Food for Life Report* made the following comment after the release of the 2019 *Food Guide* at Minister of Health Petipas Taylor's news conference in Montreal.

*Health Canada's dietary advice should be a safe harbor in a sea of exaggeration and misinformation from companies trying to sell food, weight-loss books, magazines, television health programs, and pharmaceutical drug treatments for disordered blood pressure and cholesterol.*

*The 2019 Guide wisely promotes whole grains, demotes red meat, and emphasizes fruits and vegetables.*

*But, the new Guide seems unwisely imprecise and too fearful of industry conflict in dropping nearly all quantitative recommendations for various foods. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation carefully consolidates research showing the optimum intake of various foods that would save [\\$13.8 billion annually in health care costs and productivity losses](#) and prevent [nearly 50,000 premature deaths per year](#) in Canada.*

*Failing to specify optimum consumption levels for things like whole grains (100-150 grams per day) and nuts (20 grams per day)—which would prevent thousands of deaths each—doesn't seem like a good way to steer Canadians to get the right amounts. By contrast, food labels have long set precise but too high daily targets for sugar (100 gram of total sugar instead of 25-50 grams of free sugars) and sodium (2,300 mg instead of 1,500 mg), even higher than Health Canada itself recommends. But reaching those nutrient levels seem more actionable than getting the right (but unspecified) amounts of ingredients, especially because labels rarely state the amounts of whole grains in bread and cereals, vegetables in pasta sauce, or polyunsaturated fat in cooking oils (which the WHO considers the best replacement for saturated fat).*

*Fuzzy advice to enjoy food and be mindful of ads, eating habits, and over-complicated labels seems like a needlessly low-leverage agent of change. And, Health Canada's advice to breastfeed babies wasn't elevated to new Food Guide.*

*The safeguards against industry interference did not prevent them from lobbying the colleagues and bosses of the Food Guide scientists. For instance, according to the Lobbyist Registry, in 2018 alone, the dairy, grocery, cattle, edible oil, chicken, soft drink, meat, and soy industries met with the Minister or her staff while she supervised plans for a national food strategy, front-of-pack nutrition labelling, and the new Food Guide.*

*It is not clear if the quantitative advice is still being hammered-out, but **that** will be where the rubber meets the road when Health Canada releases it to health professionals later in 2019. Giving fuzzy advice to 37 million people leaves too much elbow room for the hucksters to market their wares and undermines consumers' power to protect their own health.*

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**For more information:** Contact Bill Jeffery editor of *Food for Life Report*, and executive director of the Centre for Health Science and Law at [editor@foodforlifereport.ca](mailto:editor@foodforlifereport.ca) or 613-565-2140. In 2004-2007, Bill Jeffery, a handful of reporters, and Ottawa bariatric physician Dr. Yoni Freedhoff repeatedly raised concerns about conflicts of interest and lack of transparency in the evidentiary basis for revisions to *Canada's Food Guide*. Last summer, the advertisement-free *Food for Life Report* featured a cover story on *Canada's Food Guide* (see: [public access annotated Food Guide](#) and [full text of issue #2 behind a paywall](#)).