

For immediate release

Prime Minister Harper urged to keep government's promise to Canadian families dealing with severe food allergies

On eve of Halloween, two and half year old food labelling regulations wait for approval

Toronto, October 28, 2010 – Ghoulish Halloween costumes are not nearly as scary to the 2 million Canadians affected by serious food allergies as the lingering fate of proposed food labelling regulations. The changes, announced in July 2008, are intended to make it easier to read ingredient labels on pre-packaged foods. As there is no way of predicting how severe an allergic reaction may be and no known cure for anaphylaxis, avoidance of allergens is the only means of staying safe. Food allergy is the leading cause of potentially life-threatening anaphylactic reactions.

“People with food allergies and celiac disease and those who shop for them must be able to make informed decisions based on food labels that are accurate, clear, and complete,” said Dr. Richard Warrington, President, Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CSACI). Laurie Harada, Executive Director of Anaphylaxis Canada and herself the parent of a teen with multiple food allergies further notes that “As people shop for Halloween candy and begin to think about holiday celebrations the lack of clear ingredient labels will really hit home.”

The current food labelling policy is not stringent enough to ensure such accurate and clear descriptions of food ingredients on pre-packaged foods. This is why Anaphylaxis Canada, the CSACI, the Canadian Allergy, Asthma & Immunology Foundation, the Allergy/Asthma Information Association, Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires, Canadian Celiac Association and Allergic Living Magazine strongly support the *Proposed Amendments to Enhance the Labelling of Allergens, Gluten Sources and Added Sulphites*.

Over the past two years, each of these groups has provided community feedback to Health Canada and/or participated in consultations directly with Health Canada. While the regulations were expected to receive final approval in February of this year, the community is still waiting. Worse, there is a concern that if these regulations are not approved soon the timeline for such approval will expire and this lengthy and costly process will have to start over again.

If the current food labelling shortfalls are not addressed, there will be continued health and food safety costs such as:

- Increased number of emergency department visits following accidental food exposure
- Limited access to safe, nutritious foods for a growing population afflicted by food allergy and celiac disease
- Costly food allergen recalls because it is impossible to hold food manufacturers, importers and distributors to standards that have not been clarified and are not mandatory.

“The community has been advocating for clear ingredient labels on foods for more than a decade,” adds Jim McCarthy, Executive Director, Canadian Celiac Association “The government announced changes to the regulations more than two years ago but they have yet to be finalized. It’s time to step up and keep their promise.”

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Anaphylaxis Canada is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping those at risk for anaphylaxis and those who care for them. We are committed to creating a safer world for people with food allergies through research, education and advocacy. More information can be found at www.anaphylaxis.ca.

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