



# URBAN PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK

## RÉSEAU CANADIEN POUR LA SANTÉ URBAINE

February 9, 2011

SECRETARIAT:

DR GERRY PREDY

Delivered via: email to:

CAPITAL HEALTH

SUITE 300

10216 - 124 STREET,

EDMONTON AB

T5N 4A3

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq  
Minister of Health  
House of Commons  
460 Confederation Building  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

**Re: Endorsement of the Sodium Working Group's Sodium Reduction Strategy**

Dear Minister Aglukkaq:

VICTORIA

VANCOUVER

SURREY

CALGARY

EDMONTON

SASKATOON

REGINA

WINNIPEG

LONDON

HAMILTON

PEBI

TORONTO

OTTAWA

MONTRÉAL

LONGUEUIL

QUÉBEC

HALIFAX

ST. JOHN'S

The Urban Public Health Network brings together the Medical Officers of Health of the eighteen largest public health departments in Canada. As senior public health physicians, we have responsibility for protecting and promoting the health of more than 50 per cent of Canada's population.

The Sodium Working Group released their report, "Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada" in July 2010. This report outlines a comprehensive approach that addresses food supply, education and awareness, research, and monitoring and evaluation. The UPHN strongly recommend implementing this report immediately to reduce the risk of hypertension, stroke, cardiovascular disease and other sodium-related illness in Canada. In particular, we strongly endorse the SWG's interim sodium intake target of a population average of 2300 mg sodium/day.

The UPHN propose a number of additional recommendations for strengthening the strategy. These include:

- Clearly articulate the timeline and interim targets for sodium reduction, and the criteria for transitioning from a voluntary to regulatory approach. Work on developing a regulatory approach should occur concurrently with the voluntary approach.
- Clearly articulate the governance structure.
- Further elaboration on the funding mechanism.
- Clarify that the main goal of the education and awareness campaign is to enable consumers to make educated choices and therefore shift consumption patterns.
- Establish a transparent, comprehensive national tracking process to monitor industry progress in meeting sodium reduction targets.
- Encourage transparency and accountability in all aspects of the strategy.
- Further emphasis on the needs of low-income groups, Aboriginals and ethnic minorities throughout the Strategy.

Detailed comments are available in the attached Appendix A.

A national, multi-faceted, collaborative effort to reduce sodium consumption in Canada has the potential to significantly reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease for the Canadian health care system. We look forward to furthering our work with the Ministry of Health to address this important health issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Prey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

G. Prey, MD, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health  
On behalf of the Urban Public Health Network,