

Dietitians of Canada Remarks at Launch of Canada’s Food Guide: Part I – Jan 22, 2019 – Montréal

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Thank you, Minister Petitpas-Taylor for the invitation to speak on behalf of Dietitians of Canada. As the organization that represents dietitians in every province and territory, we have been eagerly awaiting this day! Dietitians work every day to improve the health of Canadians through food and nutrition and have been active participants in the revision process. They will be proud to see that the results are informed by scientific evidence and in line with the recommendations we provided in consultation¹. Dietitians undergo rigorous and comprehensive training and are the only regulated nutrition professionals in Canada. Today, we salute the many dietitians and members of Dietitians of Canada who worked within Health Canada on the development of this Food Guide, as well as all the dietitians who contributed to focus groups and other stakeholder consultations.

What is striking about today’s launch is the shift to a broader approach – talking not only about what Canadians should eat, but also how they should eat. We commend Health Canada on the Dietary Guidelines for Health Professionals and Policy Makers²: they are robust, thoughtful and based on an up-to-date evidence review. Health Canada has translated these Guidelines into nine recommendations for Canadians, a direction we fully support. These recommendations are easy to understand, evidence-informed and in line with the guidance that dietitians already use with their clients and patients, such as cook more often, eat meals with others³ and to limit highly processed foods. We are proud to see this modern and relevant approach reflected in the materials presented today.

The tools that make up Canada’s food guide provide practical, evidence-informed guidance for healthy Canadians, two years of age and older. Health Canada acknowledges that individuals with specific dietary requirements including those receiving care in a clinical setting need additional guidance or specialized advice from a dietitian⁴. Dietitians are everywhere and we are dedicated to supporting Canadians throughout their life-long journey with food.

We are also happy to see the inclusion of important considerations namely traditional foods, cultural diversity and environmental sustainability. Our members work in all provinces and territories and we have advocated for increased access to traditional foods. Backed by the evidence, dietitians know this improves the quality of diets for many Indigenous Peoples⁵. We are pleased to see the diversity of food choices, including traditional foods, represented in the tools.

¹ <https://www.dietitians.ca/Member/Resources-from-A-Z/Dietary-Guidance.aspx>

² www.Canada.ca/FoodGuide – Online Resources “Canada’s Dietary Guidelines” (formerly known as the dietary guidance policy document)

³ Page 13 in Canada’s Dietary Guidelines for Health Professionals and Policy Makers, 2019.

⁴ Page 1 in Canada’s Dietary Guidelines for Health Professionals and Policy Makers, 2019.

⁵ Pages 4, 9, 14, 31 in Canada’s Dietary Guidelines for Health Professionals and Policy Makers, 2019.

Health Canada’s acknowledgement that “food choices can have an impact on the environment”⁶ also provides important policy direction for the future. Scientific evidence supports recommendations to eat more plant-based foods, including protein-rich foods that were formerly called “Alternatives”, while still including animal foods like meat and milk. The conservation of natural resources and reduction of food waste will support a long term and reliable food supply for future generations.

Today’s launch represents a bold and courageous step for health promotion in Canada, as an essential pillar of a food policy and of the broader Healthy Eating Strategy⁷. Health Canada is demonstrating its unwavering commitment to creating food environments that make it easier for Canadians to make healthier choices.

We note bold examples of this commitment in the Dietary Guidelines. For example, the recommendation that foods and beverages offered in publicly funded institutions should align with these Guidelines has the potential to drive major change⁸. When it is easier to purchase vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein foods than it is to purchase highly processed foods and beverages, Canadians will make healthier choices.

Going forward, dietitians encourage Health Canada to remain committed to ongoing research through your Evidence Review Cycle⁹. As well, please take the opportunity to evaluate the use of these new Food Guide tools once they are disseminated. Your process to develop a new food guide has been based on wide consultation and you have been meticulous and transparent. We encourage you to continue to be responsive to Canadians’ needs for healthy eating information, especially with this more fluid web-based platform that contains a suite of tools available for use by diverse audiences.

Congratulations on this day as you proudly launch new dietary guidelines and new tools for Canada’s Food Guide. We look forward to working across sectors and with all levels of government to help with their implementation and will continue to support the many elements of your Healthy Eating Strategy.

Thank you, very much.

⁶ Pages 9, 15, 37 in Canada’s Dietary Guidelines for Health Professionals and Policy Makers, 2019.

⁷ <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/vision-healthy-canada/healthy-eating.html>

⁸ Pages 1, 22, 26 in Canada’s Dietary Guidelines for Health Professionals and Policy Makers, 2019.

⁹ Refers to two documents – Evidence Review 2015, Evidence Review 2018 (an update) – available at [Canada.ca/FoodGuide](https://www.canada.ca/foodguide) – Online Resources “Evidence Review”; see also <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/food-nutrition/evidence-review-dietary-guidance-summary-results-implications-canada-food-guide.html>