

**Parents and Educators Need
to be Aware
of the Health Risks
of Consuming Energy Drinks**

**Prince Edward Island
Home and School Federation**

March 20, 2009



The Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation thanks the provincial “Standing Committee on Social Development,” for the opportunity to forward our concerns and ideas on the sale of “energy drinks”. The Federation’s position is that “energy drinks” represent an unacceptable threat to learning and to the health of Island children.

The market for so-called high-energy drinks has exploded from being worth \$200 million five years ago to \$1 billion last year. According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the energy drink market is the hottest segment in the beverage sector since bottled water.

Energy drinks are beverages like Red Bull, Sobe Adrenaline Rush, Full Throttle, Monster, Hansen’s Energy, Canadian Beaver Buzz which contain large doses of caffeine and other legal stimulants like guarana and ginseng. There are 160 mg of caffeine in one 16 oz. can of energy drink compared to 80 mg of caffeine in one small Tim Hortons coffee. That is a big punch compared to the 37 mg of caffeine in a Mountain Dew, or the 23 mg in a Coca-Cola Classic. Health Canada recommends that a child 10 - 12 years of age consume no more than 85 mg per day of caffeine.

Teens believe that the consumption of these drinks will give them that added boost needed to be alert and concentrate on their school work or compete in an athletic event. Contrary to what they believe, these drinks may leave them feeling tired and jittery. Health Canada reports adverse reactions involving “energy drinks” including electrolyte disturbances, nausea and vomiting and heart irregularities. The large dose of caffeine can also lead to caffeine intoxication which may include symptoms like restlessness, nervousness, excitement, insomnia, flushing of the face, increased urination, gastrointestinal disturbance, muscle twitching, a rambling flow of thought and speech, irritability, irregular or rapid heartbeat, and psychomotor agitation. According to a review published in the Journal of the American Pharmacists Association energy drinks cause a variety of adverse health effects. In worst cases reported, seizures and possibly even death have resulted.

According to the president of the P.E.I. Medical Society, Dr. Bill Scantlebury, “these drinks are positioned in stores next to candy in an attempt to attract younger consumers. He states that these drinks not only cause behavioural problems in children, they also pose serious health risks as well.” The P.E.I. Medical Society is calling on the provincial government to ban the sale of caffeine-laden energy drinks to kids.

The Western School Board and Eastern School District in Prince Edward Island have taken steps to eliminate the use of energy drinks by students on school property by imposing a ban on energy drinks on school property and prohibiting the consumption of energy drinks on school property, respectively. This is in keeping with school districts in Newfoundland who have taken steps to ban these beverages from their properties. Lesley Burgess, the regional nutritionist with Eastern Health, NL says “while companies market the drinks as a way to increase energy and improve physical performance, there are potential dangers, especially for young people.” (thetelegram.com)

Some would argue that parents should be the judge of whether their children consume energy drinks. However, parents, educators, and children need to be educated in the adverse health and behavioural risks associated with consuming energy drinks. The Federation reminds the members of the Standing Committee on Social Development that there are laws in place to protect our children from purchasing and consuming other substances that pose a serious health risk, such as tobacco and alcohol. Some countries, such as Denmark and Norway, have placed an outright ban on the sale of energy drinks.

The Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation supports the existing ban on the consumption of energy drinks on school property. The Federation further supports a ban on the sale and marketing of energy drinks to minors on PEI, as available evidence indicates that not only are these beverages detrimental to learning and performance, but they may pose a serious health risk to children.

Submitted by:
Shirley S. Jay
Executive Director
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Sources:

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To: Standing Committee on Social Development

From: Shirley S. Jay, Executive Director
Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation

RE: Consultation on Health Risks of High Energy Drinks

The Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation thanks the provincial “Standing Committee on Social Development,” for the opportunity to forward our concerns and ideas on the sale of “energy drinks”.

See attached our position statement.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 620-3186.

Regards,

Shirley S. Jay

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