

New food labelling regulations for allergens welcomed by NASK families

February 14, 2011 – The federal Minister of Health, Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, has today announced regulations to strengthen Canada’s labelling of food allergens by requiring clearer language and the declaration of otherwise “hidden” allergens, gluten sources, and sulphites. This means that Canadians with food allergies, sensitivities and celiac disease will soon be able to make more informed choices about the foods they buy.

“We are very pleased to see the Government address one of our core policy concerns,” says NASK President Cindy Paskey. “The anaphylaxis community across Canada has worked in unison on the new food labelling regulations. NASK is proud of the role we played and the effort of the Niagara MPs, working with the Minister, to get these results.”

At the announcement, the Health Minister Aglukkaq stated: “All parents want to have confidence in the food they are serving their families, and these changes to food labels will make it easier for parents of children with food allergies to identify potentially harmful, if not fatal, ingredients in foods.”

It is estimated that approximately five to six per cent of young children and three to four per cent of adults suffer from food allergies. Nearly one per cent of the population is affected by celiac disease, for whom the consumption of foods containing gluten can lead to long term complications. To read the full Government release, visit:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/_2011/2011_23-eng.php

Following Minister Aglukkaq’s remarks at the Ottawa press conference, NASK volunteer member Chris George represented the organization and a group of families promoting Niagara-area MP Dean Allison’s efforts to raise awareness of anaphylaxis on Parliament Hill.

Explaining the significance of the announcement for families having loved ones with severe, life-threatening allergies, Mr. George stated: “Shopping for us, at times, is challenging. We read food labels a lot. We are the family that goes, aisle to aisle, reading every label before putting the product into our shopping cart. We read the labels a few times in the store – and again at home... For us, this is habitual. It is also absolutely necessary.”

“We depend on food producers and packagers to label contents correctly. Over the years, labels concerning allergens have been getting better. However, there are still times when the label is unclear and we are unsure... We need to be 100% sure.” [To read Chris George’s full remarks, go here:

<http://cgacommunications.com/bygeorge/?p=1602>]

5-point Policy Request of the Federal Government

NASK is currently advancing a 5-point policy request of the federal government. The five points include:

1. Federal Coordination – of programs and services dealing with anaphylaxis and food allergy information;
2. Coordinated Awareness Campaigns – both targeted and general public information initiatives;
3. Long Term Commitment to Research – a strategic response and more dollars for research;
4. Improved Allergen Labelling – for foods, drugs, cosmetic and personal care products; and,
5. Improved Transportation Safeguards – airline and public transportation policies that reduce risk for food allergic passengers.

Details of the policy requests can be read here:

<http://www.nask.ca/files/5-Point%20Policy%20Items%20re%20Motion%20546.pdf>

Dean Allison and the Niagara Region MPs are championing Motion 456. It is hoped that the House of Commons may debate the motion in the near future. The motion reads: *That in the opinion of the House, anaphylaxis is a serious concern for an increasing number of Canadians and the government should take the appropriate measures necessary to ensure these Canadians are able to maintain a high quality of life.*

Media contact:

**Cindy Paskey, NASK President –
905-934-0681; nask.niagara@gmail.com**