

## Who decides what we eat? Industry or science?

Opinion Sep 12, 2019 by Joan Stonehocker [YorkRegion.com](#)

Canada's Food Guide has always been a political tool, serving interests beyond health promotion.

The first Canada Food Guide, released in 1942, had a goal of strengthening men for the war effort. Malnutrition was widespread due to the Great Depression, and war recruits were being rejected. The Canada Food Guide emerged as a tool to build and promote strong soldiers and efficient workers. Between 1944 and 2007, there were seven versions of the food guide. In each revision, political interests took precedence over health — and over the years, revisions to the guide became heavily influenced by the food industry.

The most recent Canada Food Guide, released in January 2019, attempted to remove food lobbyists' power in guiding healthy eating in this country. And it succeeded: this document is radically different than all other Food Guides we've seen. It is evidence-based and throws away confusing food measurements to focus on food proportions and how to eat. The strength of this guide is that private meetings were not allowed between food and beverage industry and Health Canada during its creation — it is free of industry power and influence.

It is a conflict of interest for the food industry to advise, provide research or consult on federal, provincial or municipal policies that impact health. Industry has very effective lobbyists; we saw their influence halt Bill S-228, legislation to prohibit food and beverage marketing to children under the age of 12, and stall front-of-package labelling.

As individuals, we can need to ensure that government and politicians put our health and well-being ahead of industry influence and profit. York Region Food Network's goal is to make food an election issue. Government is responsible to ensure that no one goes hungry and healthy food is easily accessible. We need to talk to our federal candidates about food in our community. York Region Food Network is hosting an Eat Think Vote event, an opportunity for community members to speak with federal candidates ahead of the upcoming election. Visit [www.yrfn.ca](#) for more information about Eat Think Vote.

*— Joan Stonehocker's lifelong passion for growing and eating healthy food aligns perfectly with her role as the executive director of York Region Food Network and acting chair of the York Region Food Council. Under her leadership, the committed team at YRFN advocates for income responses to food insecurity, and continuously develops and promotes healthy food projects that are a catalyst for building strong and vibrant communities.*

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