



# The Catholic Women's League of Canada

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September 21, 2016

The Honourable Jane Philpott, M.P.  
Minister of Health  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

Dear Ms. Minister,

The Catholic Women's League of Canada, founded in 1920, is the largest national organization of women in Canada, with in excess of 83,000 members represented in every province and the military. The League has often received the commendation and keen appreciation of federal, provincial and municipal authorities for the voluntary services ably performed by its nationwide membership and is organized and pledged to serve all citizens of goodwill.

I am writing to express members' concern that all Canadians should be able to make fully informed choices about their food and drug products. Currently, Health Canada regulations ensure that there are warning labels on food products; however, adequate warning labels regarding all inactive substances and additives such as colouring agents and excipients are lacking. Substances are routinely added to food during preparation and storage in order to maintain nutritive quality, extend shelf life or enhance appearance. Such substances may cause adverse reactions in people with particular sensitivities. Appropriate warning labels would allow these people to avoid inadvertent ingestion.

This problem can also arise with pharmaceuticals because in their formulation, excipients are commonly used to keep them free of microorganisms, extend shelf life, improve taste, etc. Unfortunately, excipient-related adverse drug reactions are not uncommon as patient information sheets do not have to contain information on additives and excipients.

Many people suffer from adverse reactions to inactive substances and additives and may not even realize what caused their reaction. Through adequate warning labels on food products, adequate information on patient information sheets accompanying drug products, and a program of public education, citizens would be able to effectively self-monitor their conditions, and thereby, take greater responsibility for their personal health and reduce overall health costs.

On behalf of members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, I encourage the federal government to consider this three-pronged approach to advising citizens of inactive substances and additives in their food and drugs products. I look forward to your favourable response to this matter.

Respectfully yours,

Margaret Ann Jacobs  
National President

c.c. The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada