



OPEN LETTER TO HCC MEMBERSHIP

August 14, 2015

Dear Members of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition,

Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica Taxation of Cigarettes, Alcohol and Sugar Sweetened Beverages & Foods

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) is pleased to announce a major public success in the region. On Friday July 24th, 2015, the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica announced, effective September 1, 2015, a 10% tax increase on cigars, cigarettes, alcohol beverages, as well as sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) and foods. Further, Dominica's Prime Minister, Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, has indicated that revenue generated through the tax measures will contribute to the production and maintenance of a national "Get Healthy" Campaign, "in which we take the message to our schools, civic and community organisations, churches and NGOs and the public at large." These actions together with the recently announced enactment of 10% Excise Tax on SSBs in Barbados are major public health successes for the Caribbean region.

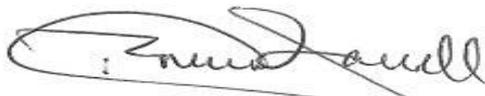
The Prime Minister made the announcement as he delivered the 2015-2016 national budget. The Prime Minister noted: "While we have introduced interventions to encourage physical activity, there is need to take action to reduce the consumption of substances, which have a direct causal link to the incidence of CNCD's." He cited the "bad practices" of smoking, excessive consumption of alcohol and foods with high sugar content, as major contributors to ill health in Dominica.

The HCC applauds the bold leadership of the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and congratulates its leadership on this significant public health measure aimed at encouraging Dominicans to engage in healthier lifestyle practices. As the only regional alliance of civil society organisations focussed on responding to the epidemic of non communicable diseases (NCDs) in the region, the HCC is committed to promoting and supporting initiatives which seek to create environments which are supportive of changing behaviours which lead to a reduction of disability and deaths related to chronic diseases.

Across the region, overweight and obesity rates are skyrocketing contributing to early onset of NCDs such as diabetes, heart disease and cancers and further straining already challenged health systems and national health budgets. Globally, the rising consumption of sugary drinks and foods has been cited as a major contributor to the

obesity epidemic. The Commonwealth of Dominica now joins the ranks of countries that include Finland, France, French Polynesia, Hungary, Mauritius, Samoa, Tonga, Mexico and most recently Barbados; all of whom tax SSBs as a public health measure to reduce consumption of high sugar beverages in an attempt to tackle increasingly obesogenic environments driving skyrocketing obesity rates. Preliminary findings from Mexico have revealed reductions in the purchase of taxed beverages and increases in the purchase of non-taxed beverages such as water as result of the SSBs tax introduced in January 2014. The increase in the cost of SSBs by the imposition of an excise tax is anticipated to be especially effective in reducing sugar intake if part of a broad-based health strategy that includes making healthy foods and beverages more affordable, widespread education and the restriction of marketing and promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages to children.

We call on all of our membership in the region including civil society, governments and the private sector as well as our international partners to join us in commending the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica. We look forward to the adoption of further policies and legislative action throughout the region aimed at creating enabling environments that allow people of the Caribbean to pursue healthy living.



Sir Trevor Hassell, President, HCC



Maisha Hutton, Executive Director, HCC

HCC Board of Directors