

Health Action

THE VOICE OF NATURAL WELLNESS

Immune-
boosting
Recipes

Tamanu Oil –
A Skin Indulgence

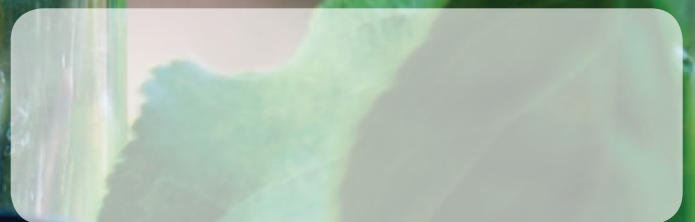
Breaking the
Fluoride
Cycle

The
“B” Happy
Vitamin

GMO Apple
Campaign
Update



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GM “Arctic Apple” Update

An apple a day keeps the doctor away. It may also keep consumers away, if it's genetically modified. The Arctic non-browning apple may be approved for sale as early as this year, but some B.C. retailers, 18 so far, have committed to not selling it. Find out who.

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Geopathic Stress: Investigating Earth Energies

We're surrounded by earth energies that impact our health and well-being. Geopathic consultant Vlasty Senovsky shares his decades of expertise in recognizing these invisible yet powerful energy fields.

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Feed Life, Starve Cancer

Discover the power of nutrition against cancer and other degenerative diseases with registered holistic nutritionist and culinary artist, Eden Elizabeth. Her Vancouver-based company, Feed Life, is positively changing lives, plate by plate. Here, she shares her tips for health.

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The Power of the Old-fashioned Petition

No time to stop and sign? In this era of online communication, the old-fashioned petition nevertheless still holds power over politics. Read about the petition for the Charter of Health Freedom, which is rivalling the largest petition in Canadian history and is still growing.

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Petition Power Then and Now

The Charter of Health Freedom, the internet and the Canadian government

by Carolyn Steele

The internet has revolutionized public engagement with politics. We are able, at the touch of an icon, to share information, pass comment, add a vote or append our name to demands for action. E-petitions fly around the world in a matter of days, garnering millions of signatories; they ignite passion and persuade governments to take notice. But how much and why? And

what is going on behind the scenes?

Our right to petition

The right to petition parliament is an ancient idea. It began in Britain with the 13th century *Magna Carta*, when citizens first demanded rights from an all-powerful monarch. Over centuries of political upheaval, petitions became a mechanism to request changes in legislation or policy. The idea

travelled with the *Mayflower* to the United States; The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution includes, “the right of the people ... to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Things were about to change back in Britain, however. By the 19th century, petitions had become so popular that Parliament could receive up to 30,000 in a year. Amid concern that petitions were obstructing normal parliamen-

tary business, reforms ensured that the practice of debating them came to an end. These days a paper petition may be presented to the U.K. House of Commons by a member of parliament, but more usually they are placed in a green bag behind the Speaker’s chair and the contents merely noted in the day’s proceedings. Valid petitions are handed to the relevant government department for observation and comment, but clearly the days of paper

petitions creating parliamentary mayhem have passed.

Most countries with a British model of government have some form of right to petition. Usually only residents of that nation are able to sign and this is the case in Canada. Canadian petitions are checked for validity by the Clerk of Petitions' office and are presented to the House of Commons by an MP. The minister of the relevant department is required to respond in writing within 45 days.

Paper petitions in Canada are alive and well ...

When you sign an old-fashioned petition, your MP knows that your level of engagement is worth more than a click of the mouse.

Petitioning in Canada can be remarkably effective. The largest petition in Canadian history, 625,000 signatures demanding a bill of rights, provided the perfect catalyst for then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker to translate his personal observations of injustice into a piece of groundbreaking legislation. Politicians do take notice of petitions.

E-petition effectiveness

Online campaigns have been changing the world since 2007. Websites such as change.org,

Greenpeace and avaaaz.org have shown that international statements of discontent, demands for human rights, ecological responsibility and "we're watching you" observations to rogue nations can achieve much. Avaaz began with 87,000 "virtual marchers" protesting military escalation in Iraq. Their most high-profile campaign pulled in more than 1.6 million signatures in support of the United Nations' recognition of Palestine during 2011.

In successful online campaigns, however, an e-petition is usually just one part of a strategy that includes public protest, calling, writing and paid advertising.


The U.K. was the first sovereign government to experiment with e-petitions. In 2011 it launched a scheme whereby any topic gaining 100,000 signatures would be considered for debate. This created interest, excitement, a huge number of petitions, some deflated expectations, a headache for the government and ongoing controversy.


In this scheme's first year, 36,000 e-petitions were submitted, 47 percent of those were rejected as invalid, and just 10 valid e-petitions attained the required 100,000 signatures. Even those few didn't all achieve a debate. The news isn't all bad, though; not only did several petitions hit the headlines for whimsical reasons (the one requiring all MPs to undergo IQ tests became remarkably popular) but some good has resulted. A 2012 e-petition demanded release of secret documents relating to a disaster that killed 96 people at

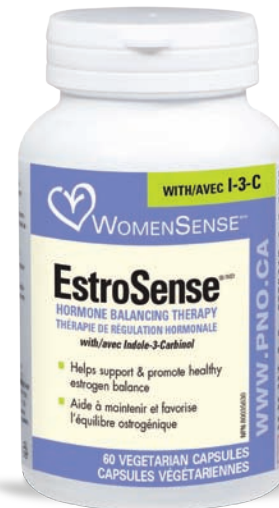
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Ask Dr. Marita Schauch, BSc, ND



 **I have terrible PMS every month and my periods are really heavy – is there anything natural I can take to get some relief?**

 Premenstrual syndrome, also known as PMS, can include symptoms such as mood swings, depression, cravings, bloating, water retention and headaches. PMS can occur for up to 2 weeks before the onset of a woman's menstrual flow and affects somewhere between 70 to 90% of women. An imbalance in hormones, especially the ratio of estrogen to progesterone, is commonly the culprit for many women. This is often referred to as "Estrogen Dominance" and can develop as a result of poor diet, a sluggish liver and exposure to excess environmental estrogens found in plastics, cosmetics, pesticides, the birth control pill, or hormone replacement therapy. Estrogen dominance has been linked to a wide range of conditions, including heavy, painful periods, uterine fibroids, endometriosis, infertility and even estrogen dependent cancers such as breast and uterine cancers. The herb milk thistle has a long history of being a very safe liver detoxifier. A healthy liver helps to eliminate and detoxify these harmful and excess estrogens in order to boost the body's metabolic rate and ensure that estrogen and progesterone are in healthy balance. Other beneficial herbs to help balance high estrogen levels include: curcumin, calcium-d-glucarate, indole-3-carbinol and sulforaphane. **EstroSense**® is a safe and effective detoxifier that helps to eliminate those harmful, excess estrogens so that you can have effortless and PMS free periods!



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the Hillsborough football stadium in 1989. The e-petition led to a parliamentary debate, full disclosure of all documents and an independent inquiry.

The U.S. followed the U.K. in September 2011 with their We the People initiative. Initially, petitions in the U.S. that gathered more than 5,000 signatures within 30 days gained the right to an official response. In the first month, 12,513 petitions were created, of which a mere 77 generated responses. At the end of the first year the White House website reported, “We knew that this many petitions would challenge our ability to offer timely and meaningful responses to petitions in the long term. So we raised signature threshold to receive a response to 25,000.”

Even trivial issues received attention. A petition suggesting construction of a Star Wars-style Death Star received a reply from the science and space chief for Obama’s budget office, “The administration does not support blowing up planets,” followed by an opportunity to share current policy on science education in schools.

Today, U.S. e-petitions involve two thresholds: 150 signatures within 30 days for a petition to be searchable on the White House website and 100,000 signatures within 30 days to require a response. It appears that a second nation is discovering that making action too easy can swamp the serious issues and distract attention from the business of running a country. Meanwhile, new words like slacktivism and

clicktivism describe the momentary supporting of a cause when it appears on a screen without true engagement with making change.

Where does Canada stand? Last year a Private Member’s Motion from Kennedy Stewart (MP for Burnaby-Douglas, B.C.) seeking consideration of e-petitions received enthusiastic cross-party support. It asked the Standing Commit-

The NHPPA petition in support of the Charter of Health Freedom currently stands at over 93,000 signatures.

tee on Procedure and House Affairs to study e-petitions and bring recommendations to the House within 12 months—a motion that was adopted by the House of Commons on January 29, 2014. Some MPs have concerns that e-petitions may disenfranchise those without internet access and lead to frivolous issues taking up parliamentary time, and the committee will consider these issues along with such matters as authenticity of signatures, appropriate rules and cost. In the light of other countries’ teething troubles it seems prudent for Canada to debate carefully, but in the meantime paper petitions in Canada are alive and well. If a Canadian citizen wishes to request a change in legislation there is the mechanism to do it and it is well respected. Politicians know what it means when an individual puts a real pen to real paper, so when you sign

an old-fashioned petition, your MP knows that your level of engagement is worth more than a click of the mouse.

Get behind a Canadian petition for health freedom

The petition by the Natural Health Products Protection Association (NHPPA) in support of the Charter of Health Free-

dom currently stands at over 93,000 signatures (see below). Although online petitions garner millions, that is irrelevant in Canada today. They may be the future but, for now, it is probably in the interests of every Canadian that our govern-

ment not be bogged down in thousands of frivolous requests for death stars and IQ tests.

The Charter of Health Freedom is a fully formed piece of legislation, drawn up by a consortium of natural health industry stakeholders and lawyers, originally designed to address problems with the Natural Health Product Regulations. Those groups involved with creating the charter foresaw many potential restrictions to Canadians’ ability to manage their own health and they created a solution that is needed more now than when it was drafted. Right now, only Canadian citizens who put pen to paper can petition Parliament to make this vital legislative change.

To read more about the Charter of Health Freedom, and to sign and distribute the petition, visit www.nhppa.org.

Carolyn Steele, BSc (Hons) MSc, is NHPPA’s information officer and a writer, editor and web developer with a background as both paramedic and psychologist.

Charter of Health Freedom Update

The Charter of Health Freedom protects Canadians’ access to natural health products and traditional medicines by creating a separate legal category for them. Under the charter, instead of being treated as dangerous drugs under the Canada Food and Drugs Act, NHPs are deemed to be safe unless there is evidence of harm, as they are in the United States.

The Charter of Health Freedom petition topped 93,000 in April 2014. Fewer than 3,000 more signatures are needed to equal the largest federal petition to be delivered to Parliament, in one single submission on record, since April 27, 1999. It is possible then, that when we reach our next milestone, of over 100,000 signatures, the Charter of Health Freedom will be on record as second only to the Bill of Rights in public support.