



Lawrence Square
700 Lawrence Ave. West, Suite 310
Toronto, Ontario M6A 3B4

March 4, 2009

Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Queen's Park, Rm 281, Main Legislative Building
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

Dear Premier

As representatives of thousands of health professionals across the province, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) join with the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction to urge you to add a Healthy Food Supplement to the Basic Needs Allowance for all adult recipients of social assistance in your Spring 2009 budget.

Every year, dietitians in health units across Ontario calculate the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket. And every year we find that people on social assistance do not have enough money to pay the high costs of living **and** feed their families an adequate diet. We know that \$100 per month falls short of what is needed to purchase a healthy diet. However, it does begin to close the gap between current social assistance rates and the cost of basic needs.

The relationship between poverty and poor health is clear. Poor nutrition can lead to increased risk for chronic and infectious diseases, pregnancy outcomes with greater risk for low birth weight and negative impact on the growth and development of children. It costs more to treat and manage these conditions than to prevent them by ensuring people can afford an adequate diet. Consistent investment in maintaining public health is a prerequisite for maintaining a population that is prepared for productivity.

OPHA represents over 3,000 public health practitioners through individual memberships and 10 constituent societies. We actively promote child health and well-being, as well as access to affordable, nutritious and personally acceptable foods for all Ontarians. The association's mission is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health. OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians in public health representing over 170 members from every health unit in the province. Our members are specialists in applied human nutrition, members of the College of Dietitians of Ontario, and focus on health promotion and disease prevention. The society's mission is to provide a leadership forum and official voice for public health nutrition practice in Ontario.

Our organizations look forward to supporting the implementation of a \$100 per month food supplement.

Sincerely,



Carol Timmings
President
Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA)



Michele Hurd
Co-Chair
Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH)

cc. Dr. Charles Gardner, President, Association of Local Public Health Agencies