



Ontario Society of Nutrition
Professionals in Public Health

La société ontarienne des professionnel(le)s
de la nutrition en santé publique

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The mission of OSNPPH is to provide leadership in public health nutrition. It represents its members and promotes their role in improving nutrition and health of people in Ontario

February 8, 2007

Hon Jim Flaherty
Minister of Finance
Government of Canada

Dear Minister Flaherty,

On behalf of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health, I would like to express our support for the recent implementation of the Fitness Tax Credit for children.

OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians in public health in Ontario representing over 150 members working in every Health Unit/Department in the province. Members of OSNPPH work in public health units, public health nutrition education, and research and development. We are specialists in applied human nutrition, are members of the College of Dietitians of Ontario, and focus on health enhancement and disease prevention.

Preventing obesity has been identified as a public health priority in Ontario and is one of the most important issues that Registered Dietitians are tackling on a daily basis. OSNPPH members will continue help address obesity rates by moving forward an agenda prioritizing health promotion and disease prevention initiatives for the residents of Ontario. Some of our projects include developing school nutrition policies related to nutrition and healthy eating in a variety of settings, including schools, workplaces, and recreation centres. Policies have been fundamental in improving the quality of foods provided in these settings or offered for fundraising, and have a direct impact on the eating behaviours of the

populations served. Public health continues to advocate for increased physical activity in schools and in the community.

The provision of a tax credit for families who enrol their children in programs for physical activity will help some parents help their children to establish healthy lifestyle behaviours, contributing to having a healthy weight and being at less risk of chronic disease. The reality is, however, that the issue of healthy weights and access to physical activity programs goes beyond children in middle-income families. Adults, for example, need to be encouraged with incentives to take advantage of programs available to them. In addition, many families who live in middle to low-income situations, as well as living below the low-income cut-off point, are unable to afford conventional physical activity programs for their children. We must remember, as well, that those residents of Canada who live in remote locations and rural communities may have limited access to organized opportunities for children's sports activities.

We would encourage the following further changes to be implemented to help a greater proportion of the population take advantage of physical activity opportunities across Canada:

1. A fitness tax credit for adult physical activity opportunities
2. Sponsorship opportunities so that low income families may take advantage of the fitness tax credit – e.g., a parent could still apply for the tax credit even if another individual paid for the child's program
3. Subsidies available for low income families to apply for when their children are enrolled in sports with equipment costs
4. Dedicated federal funding for increased physical activity opportunities in rural and remote locations across Canada

We will be sure to work to help our residents be aware of the fitness tax credit and how to take advantage of it.

Sincerely,

Dianne Oickle, MSc, RD
Chair, OSNPPH

Cc.
Hon. Carol Skelton, Minister of National Revenue
Hon Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance

Parks and Recreation Canada (PARC)
Olivia Chow, NDP Children's Advocate
Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Jim Watson, Ministry of Health Promotion