



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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Hon. Jim Watson  
Minister of Health Promotion  
35th Floor  
250 Yonge Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2N5

Dear Minister Watson,

On behalf of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH), I would like to commend the Ministry of Health Promotion on the release of Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living. We are pleased that the Action Plan highlights a variety of initiatives involving schools, recreation centres, workplaces, aboriginal communities and accessible web- and phone-based province-wide Registered Dietitian advisory services.

OSNPPH is well positioned to support the implementation of this plan. As front line dietitians in public health, our members work in partnership on many of the successful programs highlighted in the Action Plan. We will continue to bring our skills and expertise to help roll out the plan throughout Ontario communities and expand best practices to promote healthy eating and active living. Furthermore, OSNPPH would be pleased to participate on a more direct level as a member of an external steering committee to collaborate with the Ministry of Health Promotion in an effort to advance this agenda.

OSNPPH views the Action Plan as an important first step toward developing a broad provincial nutrition strategy designed with a solid foundation in healthy public policy. A comprehensive approach would focus not only on obesity prevention, but also would incorporate access to healthy foods by socio-economically disadvantaged groups, addressing the social determinants of health, nutrition throughout the lifecycle (especially infant and child feeding), and nutrition monitoring and surveillance.

As outlined in *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives* and echoed by recommendations from the World Health Organization, a comprehensive multi-sectoral strategy that addresses both healthy eating and physical activity is required to curb overweight and obesity. We urge the Ministry of Health Promotion to consider these important elements of a comprehensive healthy weights strategy:

**1) Community-level funding for public health units** to work as part of inter-sectoral coalitions to implement innovative community nutrition and physical activity programs and to evaluate their impact. Additionally, your Ministry could provide a menu of program options that show promise or have been shown to be effective in other jurisdictions, to stimulate local action. The Ministry could demonstrate leadership by ensuring that adequate and appropriate human resources will be in position to mobilize the recommendations as soon as possible. Unfortunately, many non-regulated nutrition practitioners are frequently filling this gap adding to the confusion surrounding sources of reliable and credible nutrition information on healthy weights. To ensure credibility, it is essential that the human resources allocated to the healthy weights strategy include Registered Dietitians who are licensed with the College of Dietitians of Ontario, as opposed to non-regulated practitioners such as “nutritionists” or nutrition consultants.

**2) Evidence-based policies that encourage healthy eating and physical activity in a range of sectors** such as assessing policy options to restrict food advertising targeted at children under 13; evaluating the impact of pricing options to encourage healthier food choices; investigating the extent to which costs, such as user fees for recreational facilities, registration fees or taxes on recreational programs and third party liability insurance, are barriers to physical activity;

**3) Ongoing province- wide chronic disease risk factor surveillance** to monitor, for example, dietary intakes, physical activity and weight, and over time, and the impact our policies and programs have had in affecting these healthy lifestyle behaviours;

**4) Inter-Ministerial collaborations to create socio-economic conditions that support dietary and activity changes**, such as adequate income, housing, and the physical and built environment. For example, working with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Community and Social Services to ensure income supports that are reflective of the current cost of housing and food and provide a decent standard of living.

**5) Family health focused strategies**, such as a comprehensive provincial breastfeeding promotion strategy, increased access to pediatric dietitians services, development of a provincial child care plan, ending the National Child Benefit (NCB) clawback, and dedicated Registered Dietitian time in Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (HBHC) programs at individual Health Units.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions. The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health looks forward to working with the Ministry of Health Promotion to continue to improve the health of the residents of Ontario.

Sincerely,

Dianne Oickle, M.Sc., RD  
Chairperson, OSNPPH

cc. Honourable Dalton McGinty, Premier  
Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion  
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister  
Ms. Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association  
Mr. Garry Aslanyan, President, Ontario Public Health Association