



Ontario Society of Nutrition
Professionals in Public Health

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

c/o Ontario Public Health Association
700 Lawrence Ave. West, Suite 310
Toronto, Ontario M6A 3B4

November 2, 2007

Dr. Robert Washburn
Chair, Annual Scientific Assembly Committee
Ontario College of Family Physicians
357 Bay Street, Mezzanine Level
Toronto, ON M5H 2T7
ocfp@cfpc.ca

Dear Dr. Washburn,

We are writing to express concern regarding one of the general sessions (GEN305) being presented at the Ontario College of Family Physicians' upcoming Annual Scientific Assembly.

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) is the independent and official voice of registered dietitians (RDs) in public health in Ontario representing over 150 members from all 36 health units in the province. Members of OSNPPH work in local public health units to create healthy eating policies, to develop public health nutrition education programs, and participate in research projects. We are specialists in applied human nutrition, are members of the College of Dietitians of Ontario, and focus on healthy growth and development and chronic disease prevention.

It is regrettable that on the multi-disciplinary and complex topic of dietary guidance, the opinions of one medical practitioner are being highlighted in the session, "Big Food – How Politics and the Food Industry Helped to Shape Canada's new Food Guide." While we acknowledge that a professional conference should provide a forum for practitioners to educate their peers on evidence-based information, we respectfully suggest that opinions might be better voiced in the context of a panel presentation whereby a balance of perspectives could be provided to the audience.

We are concerned that the viewpoints expressed in this session will lead to the provision of inconsistent nutrition messages to patients and the public, undermining the efforts of registered dietitians who routinely educate clients using Health Canada's *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. As regulated health professionals in Ontario, RDs are highly educated in the sciences related to foods and human nutrition and are uniquely trained to apply this knowledge in a variety of settings. However, we acknowledge that physicians are the leading source of health information for the public and this reinforces the potential for message confusion.

Our organization along with all major health organizations in Canada and all provincial and local health authorities recognize Health Canada as an authoritative source of evidence-based nutrition information for over 70 years. Collectively, we have confidence that the approach implemented by Health Canada in the development of *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* as documented on their web site was transparent

and open whereby *all* stakeholders' input, including that of our organization, was sought and considered in the process.

We respectfully urge the Ontario College of Family Physicians to consider alternative presentation modes that will facilitate the sharing of multi-disciplinary views on healthy eating topics for future professional development events.

Sincerely,

Tara Brown, MHSc, RD

Chair, Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health

Erica Di Ruggiero, MHSc, RD

Chair, Ontario Collaborative Group for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*

cc: Dr. Danielle Brule, Director, RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, Health Canada
Roselle Martino, Senior Nutrition Consultant (A), Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion
Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association
Dr. Charles Gardner, Chair, Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies

**The Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity brings together representatives from government and non-governmental organizations, academia, and public health, with expertise in nutrition and physical activity. The Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division is the secretariat for the Group.*