



Ontario Society of Nutrition  
Professionals in Public Health

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

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

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

November 13, 2006

Barb LeBlanc  
Executive Director, Health Policy  
Ontario Medical Association  
300-325 University Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2K7

Dear Ms. LeBlanc,

On behalf of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH), we would like to request that the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) join us in advocating for the reinstatement of Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) coverage of weight loss counseling by a Registered Dietitian for patients who are referred by their family physicians.

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. Public health nutrition professionals have experienced an explosion of

requests from the general public and referrals from physicians seeking weight loss counselling for their patients. Since counselling by a Registered Dietitian is not currently covered by OHIP, this service is often no longer available from outpatient Registered Dietitians in hospitals. The general public must pay a fee for service to obtain counseling from a Registered Dietitian in private practice. Public health units across the province have a variety of print resources for consumers related to healthy lifestyles and can provide basic guidance on how to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. However, it is not within the public health mandate to provide individual counselling to satisfy these urgent requests for the nutritional treatment of obesity. The focus of Registered Dietitians in public health is on the prevention of overweight and obesity through addressing the determinants of health.

OSNPPH members will 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. Our role in creating supportive environments in communities across Ontario compliments the OMA's role in treatment of obesity. Overall, the result is a comprehensive approach including a multi-sectoral, community-wide commitment to addressing this issue.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

Dianne Oickle, MSc, RD  
Chair, Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health

Cc.

Linda Corby, Director of Policy Communications, Dietitians of Canada  
Erica DiRuggeiro, Chair, Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating Hon.  
George Smitherman, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care  
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario  
Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director of Ontario Public Health Association  
Linda Stewart for Advocacy Committee of aPHa