



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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June 4, 2008

The Honourable Margaret Best
Minister of Health Promotion
Ministry of Health Promotion
18th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON
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Dear Honourable Minister,

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) commend the McGuinty government and the Ministry of Health Promotion for the continued commitment to improving the nutritional health of the population, including through Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living, as well as the recent announcement to address childhood obesity in Ontario. OSNPPH, a constituent society of the Ontario Public Health Association, is the official organization of Registered Dietitians (RDs) working within Ontario's public health system. Our members, primarily employed by local public health units, are experts in population health promotion, focusing on nutrition-related disease prevention.

We understand that you have received a proposal from Primacy to fund Eat Right In-Store Nutrition Education programs in Ontario. RDs across Ontario, including members of OSNPPH, have been asked by Primacy to write letters to you to support their proposal. Rather than speak to the Primacy issue in isolation, however, OSNPPH urges you to view the proposal from Primacy, as well as letters of support you receive, instead, as a flag of the need to review how nutrition services are provided in Ontario and, in particular, public access to RDs.

A substantial proportion of Ontarians' health care dollars are spent on treating chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, and related conditions such as obesity. Nutrition is not only important in the treatment of chronic diseases; it is, moreover, a key component in the prevention of many chronic diseases as well as obesity.

Nutrition education that is offered as an in-store service by RDs would be of some value. However, there would be much more impact on the health of many Ontarians if overall access to the services of RDs was greatly increased, including individual counseling

(through outpatient services or through OHIP sponsored private practice), as well as strong and varied public health programming from RDs.

Increased funding is needed for appropriate and diverse nutrition services to be available to all Ontarians. We would like to recommend that the Ministry of Health Promotion address the needs identified in the 2006 report "Revitalizing Ontario's Public Health Capacity: The Final Review of the Capacity Review Committee", and aim to achieve an adequate and appropriate public health nutrition workforce that has the capacity to handle these new demands. By increasing the capacity of public health to contribute to meeting the growing need for RD services, Ontario's limited primary prevention and health promotion dollars would be used to maximum benefit.

As the representative organization for public health nutrition professionals, we encourage you to consider the broader issue of overall equitable access to RDs. There is unprecedented public awareness of the importance of good nutrition to preventing obesity and chronic diseases. Increasing public access to RD services, including those of public health, is a good example of how public health and government policy-makers should work together.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss our concerns. We hope the Ministry of Health Promotion chooses to consult with all stakeholders and review the issues related to equitable and effective access to nutrition services across the province of Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tara" being more prominent than the last name "Brown".

Tara Brown, MHSc, RD
Chair, OSNPPH

cc

Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Colleen Kiel, Senior Nutrition Consultant, Ministry of Health Promotion
Roselle Martino, Senior Nutrition Consultant, Ministry of Health Promotion
Lynda Corby, Director of Public Affairs, Dietitians of Canada
Leslie Whittington-Carter, Ontario Government Relations Coordinator, Dietitians of Canada
Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA)
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA)
Christine Bushey, Chair, Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Managers in Public Health
Erica Di Ruggiero, Chair, Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity