



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. W., Suite 310  
Toronto, ON M6A 3B4

July 28, 2008

The Honorable Kathleen Wynne  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Honorable Minister,

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) applauds the Ministry of Education for the introduction of the *Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act*. OSNPPH is pleased to be participating in the Nutrition Standards for Schools Committee convened by your Ministry to provide expert advice on regulatory considerations with respect to the new Act. We consider the *Trans Fat Standards Regulation* to be a positive first step in creating healthier nutrition environments in Ontario schools.

OSNPPH members, registered dietitians working within Ontario's 36 public health units, will be paramount in supporting school boards with implementing regulations that are introduced as a result of the *Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act*. The public health mandate requires health units to work with school boards to support healthy eating in Ontario schools. Significant progress in this regard has been made over the past several years which we believe is attributable in part to our 2004 report, *Call to Action: Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment*. In the four year period since its release, a majority of Ontario's public health units have officially endorsed the *Call to Action* and use it locally as the framework to guide their work to support healthy eating in schools. The *Call to Action* has also been used a number of boards of education (please refer to attached listing) as the basis for comprehensive nutrition policies that have been enacted within their jurisdictions.

Another fundamental piece of public health's work with schools is a new resource, called *Nutrition Tools for Schools (NTS)*, which was developed based on the *Call to Action* by a collaboration of public health dietitians in Ontario. *NTS* is being utilized in almost all health units in the province. As a result, OSNPPH believes we have:

- created a state of readiness/receptivity for Ontario schools by providing them a consistent nutrition message through *NTS*;
- enhanced collaboration between health units and boards of education; and,
- increased public health capacity and reduced duplication of resources.


A key component of *NTS* is the *Food Standards Reference Guide*, which provides nutrition criteria based on existing documents from Ontario and other provinces as well as the current version of *Canada's Food Guide*, for defining the healthiest food and beverage choices for school food programs and services. An overview of *NTS* and a copy of the *Food Standards Reference Guide* are attached for your reference.

We understand that the Ministry of Education is committed to building on the *Trans Fat Standards Regulation* and will be working towards the development of comprehensive nutrition regulations under the *Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act*. OSNPPH strongly encourages the Ministry of Education to consider the Food Standards within *NTS* as the basis for their development. As evidenced in the attached listing, there has been significant uptake of *NTS* and application of the Food Standards is expanding. We are concerned that if comprehensive nutrition regulations within the *Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools Act* do not align with the *NTS* Food Standards, this will have a detrimental effect on the relationships that have been built between public health units and their local school boards, as well as create confusion within schools.

We also recommend that the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministry of Health Promotion adopt *Nutrition Tools for Schools* as a province-wide resource to support the creation of healthy nutrition environments within schools. By supporting central management of this resource and its Food Standards, the Ministries would clearly demonstrate their commitment to acknowledging partnerships, reducing costly duplication and sustaining local successes that support healthy eating already in progress within Ontario schools.

In closing, OSNPPH would like to thank the Ministry of Education for the opportunity to participate on the Nutrition Standards for Schools Committee. We look forward to continued collaboration with your Ministry and other stakeholders in the development of comprehensive nutrition standards that will create an even healthier nutrition environment in Ontario schools.

Sincerely,



Michele Hurd  
Chair, OSNPPH



Lucy Valteau  
Chair, OSNPPH School Nutrition Workgroup

Copies to:

The Honorable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion  
Roselle Martino, Senior Nutrition Consultant Public Health Nutrition, Ministry of Health Promotion  
Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association  
Erica Diruggiero, Chair, Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity  
Bill Jeffery, Centre for Science in the Public Interest

Attachments:

Additional Information  
*Nutrition Tools for Schools* overview  
*Nutrition Tools for Schools – Food Standards Reference Guide*

**School Boards that have used the framework outlined in the *Call to Action* as the basis for food and nutrition policies:**

1. London Catholic District School Board
2. Niagara Catholic District School Board
3. Thames Valley School Board
4. Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
5. Limestone District School Board
6. Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
7. Hamilton-Wentworth Public District School Board
8. The Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board
9. Trillium Lakelands District School Board
10. Conseil Scolaire Public du Nord-Est de l'Ontario
11. Waterloo Catholic District School Board
12. Conseil Scolaire de district Catholique du Nouvel-Ontario
13. Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board

**Adoption of *Nutrition Schools for Tools*:**

- 31/36 health units have purchased NTS with the potential to reach at least 60 school boards and 3000 schools
- Additional purchasers include:
  - Food and Consumer Products of Canada
  - Nutrition Resource Centre
  - University of Guelph

**Application of *Nutrition Tools for Schools Food Standards*:**

Used in the development of school cafeteria RFPs for:

- Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Near North District School Board
- Grand Erie District School Board
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board

Used to develop cafeteria menu for Bill Crother's Secondary School, York Region District School Board