

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

December 18, 2007

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

Dear Honourable Minister,

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH), the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (OCGHEPA), and the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (OCDPA) commend the McGuinty government and the Ministry of Education for the recent announcement to ban industrially-produced trans fats from foods sold in cafeterias and vending machines in Ontario elementary and secondary schools. We are optimistic that the new *Healthy Food for Healthy School Act* intended to improve student food and beverage choices will benefit the nutritional and overall health of Ontario's children and youth.

OSNPPH, a constituent society of the Ontario Public Health Association, is the official organization of registered dietitians working within Ontario's public health system. Our members, primarily employed by local public health units, are experts in population health promotion, with a focus on disease prevention.

Formed in 2004, The Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (OCGHEPA) advocacy sub-committee is a provincial collaboration of non-profit, and academic organizations which addresses the individual, cultural, and social economic and environmental determinants of healthy eating, physical activity and healthy weights. The main purpose of the group is to provide a forum for concerted action on healthy eating and physical activity initiatives and to advocate for healthy policy change. Please find membership lists of all organizations enclosed with this letter.

The Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (OCDPA) is the province's collective voice on effective chronic disease prevention policy and programming. With representatives from over 30 member organizations, the group is working to keep Ontario healthy by building and promoting comprehensive chronic disease prevention and management policies and programs.

The groups believe in a comprehensive approach to school nutrition and feel that the ban on trans fat that has recently been announced by your government is a very positive first step in working toward healthier schools and healthier children. We strongly recommend that the government undergo a consultation process that spans beyond the Healthy Schools Working Table and involves all stakeholders as you work toward establishing a long term plan of action for the new legislation that moves beyond a ban of trans fat. We would suggest that the government expand the current legislation to include all instances where foods and beverages are offered or sold in schools.

OSNPPH, the OCGHEPA and the OCDPA are uniquely positioned to advise and support the provincial government in implementing this new legislation and would like to lend their support to establishing implementation plans for your *Healthy Food for Healthy Schools* legislation. The groups have done extensive work on the topic of school nutrition. In 2006, the OCGHEPA submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Health Promotion on the development of food and beverage standards available in Ontario schools. The proposal included a comprehensive strategy for stakeholder consultation at all levels of the development process. Similarly, in March 2004, OSNPPH's School Nutrition Workgroup released a *Call to Action – Creating a Healthy School Nutrition Environment*, which recommended actions to be undertaken by the provincial government, local school boards, and public health units to support attainment of healthy nutrition environments in Ontario schools.

As a result of the *Call to Action* recommendations, a collaboration of seven health units have developed, pilot-tested, fine-tuned and recently launched an innovative toolkit, *Nutrition Tools for Schools*. Among other components, the *Nutrition Tools for Schools* toolkit provides a comprehensive set of food and beverage standards to guide the foods sold and available in Ontario schools, that build on the existing provincial standards for vending machines and student nutrition programs. To date, 22 health units have purchased the toolkit to use locally within their health unit areas. We are confident that the Nutrition Tools for Schools food and beverage standards that have been developed at the local level would be an ideal starting place for your government.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you and members from your ministry to discuss how we can work with you to ensure that the new legislation benefits the health of Ontario students and addresses the recommendations made by Sheela Basrur in her 2004 report, *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives*. The Canadian Cancer Society, who acts as the secretariat for the OCGHEPA has been in contact with your scheduler, Jackie Roach, to set up a meeting at a mutually convenient time.

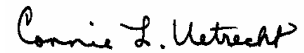
Sincerely,



Tara Brown, MHSc, RD
Chair, OSNPPH



Laura King Hahn
Chair, OCGHEPA advocacy sub-committee



Connie Uetrecht
Co-Chair, OCDPA

cc:

Hon. Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services
Elizabeth Harding, Director, Policy and Program Branch, Ministry of Education