



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

February 12, 2009

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

Dear Minister Wynne,

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*. The *Trans Fat Standards Regulation* that came into effect on September 1, 2008 is a positive first step in creating healthier nutrition environments in Ontario schools.

OSNPPH members, registered dietitians working within Ontario's 36 public health units, have been on the forefront in supporting school communities with the implementation of the *Trans Fat Standards Regulation*. A survey, with response from all 36 health units, undertaken in fall 2008 showed:

- Thirty one public health units (86%) received inquiries for information to clarify or to assist with implementation of the *Trans Fat Standards Regulation*. Requests came from school staff, school nurses, principals, parents representing school councils, school board administrators, school food service providers, cafeteria staff, private hot-lunch providers, and pizza shops.
- Public health units developed a variety of communication and educational materials to support implementation of the *Trans Fat Standards Regulation*. Of the 72 school boards in Ontario, 50 (70%) received materials developed by health units.
- Many school boards actively sought out public health assistance (e.g. provision of workshops, resources, and communications to school staff) to support implementation of the *Trans Fat Standards Regulation*. However, other public health units reported a perceived lack of interest on the part of schools and school boards to engage public health to provide supports they could offer.

We are encouraged that the Ministry of Education is committed to building on the *Trans Fat Standards Regulation* by working towards the development of comprehensive nutrition regulations. Given that there will be a greater need for health unit support to schools/school communities with the implementation of comprehensive nutrition regulations, OSNPPH would like to offer the following recommendations to the Ministry of Education as planning for their introduction and implementation is undertaken:

1. Consider the Food Standards included in *Nutrition Tools for Schools*© (NTS) as the basis for provincial nutrition regulations. The NTS resource has been purchased by 33 health units to support the public health mandate to work with schools to create/enhance healthy eating environments. These standards are currently being used by lunch catering services and to shape local school board nutrition policies and cafeteria/catering contracts.
2. Work directly with the Ministry of Health Promotion to plan a viable mechanism by which public health units can support implementation of nutrition regulations with all school boards.
3. Develop a communication plan that ensures clear and timely communication with public health units regarding the release of school nutrition regulations.
4. Reduce time, cost and duplication of resources by partnering with OSNPPH to adapt or develop provincial education resource materials for all stakeholder groups that can be consistently applied across all school boards.
5. Ensure an educational component is mandated for school board and school staff.
6. Provide clear requirements to school boards and a mechanism for monitoring that ensures accountability for implementation of the nutrition regulations.
7. Identify a point-person within the Ministry of Education who is available to provide support and direction for implementation of the regulations.

OSNPPH is pleased to be participating in the Nutrition Standards for Schools Committee (NSSC) convened by the Ministry of Education to provide expert advice on regulatory considerations with respect to the *Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act*. We look forward to further collaboration and consultation as comprehensive regulations are developed and to provide expert input into the development of communication and education materials that will be needed to support implementation of the regulations.

Sincerely,



Michele Hurd, RD
Co-Chair, OSNPPH



Carolyn Froats-Emond, RD
Chair, OSNPPH School Nutrition Workgroup

Copies to:

The Honorable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Helen Moroz, Manager, Policy and Program Branch, Ministry of Education
Roselle Martino, Ministry of Health Promotion, Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion
Sarah Lambert, School Health Coordinator, Ministry of Health Promotion
Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association
Erica DiRuggiero, Chair, Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
Dr. Charles Gardner, Chair, Council of Medical Officers of Health
Medical Officers of Health