

August 18, 2008

Honourable Deborah Matthews
Minister of Children and Youth Services
56 Wellesley St. West, 14th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2S3

Dear Minister Matthews:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (OCDPA; Alliance), the collective voice on effective chronic disease prevention and policy in Ontario. The OCDPA is a collaborative of over 30 member agencies from non-governmental health organizations, professional groups and associations, provincial and regional networks, research and academia. Together, and with a united voice, the Alliance works to keep Ontario healthy by promoting a comprehensive, coordinated province-wide chronic disease prevention system that benefits all Ontarians, in particular its children and youth.

Since its inception, the Alliance has been involved in developing plans to support a systematic approach to preventing chronic disease in Ontario. This includes the creation of our vision and foundational plan, *Thinking Like A System: the way forward to prevent chronic disease in Ontario* (2006) and several other resources, including *Primer to Action: Social Determinants of Health* (2007; rev 2008) with two of our partner agencies. This year we successfully partnered with the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment and received funds from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Futures Fund, to collaborate and address chronic diseases as a result of early exposures to toxins and contaminants.

Most recently, the OCDPA has prepared a submission to address and prevent childhood obesity in Ontario that takes into account that childhood obesity is not the job of a single organization or sector; rather, stakeholders, such as OCDPA member organizations, the public health and social services system, other non-government organizations and networks, as well as the government. Groups at all levels and across sectors must collaborate to develop and implement a coherent, coordinated plan of action to address obesity provincially. Regardless of how much money is spent, if a systematic approach to childhood obesity is not in place to direct and align organizational activities, the impact of the strategy will not be maximized to its full potential.

Within our submission, we ask that the government look at two key areas of investment: school nutrition and physical education; and community infrastructure and social/health programs. Building upon current infrastructure and expanding policies, including those that fall within the Day Nurseries Act related to nutrition and physical activity, Ontario can build a foundation upon which to enhance the health and wellbeing of its citizens and its children. The OCDPA also recognized the

intimate links between childhood obesity and poverty, and encourages the government to develop a comprehensive vision that can impact on multiple chronic diseases, their risk factors and social conditions. This approach must include a process whereby provincial and regional stakeholders are engaged within policy and program development and implementation.

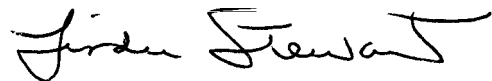
We are encouraged by the government's promise and most recent announcement to develop a poverty reduction plan for Ontario, with plans to extend the deadline to accept submissions on this topic. The OCDPA is in the midst of researching and preparing a submission to address health inequalities as a result of poverty.

We are happy to provide to you several enclosed documents, including the OCDPA's submission to address and prevent childhood obesity in Ontario, as approved and endorsed by all of our members. We appreciate your review and consideration of our documents and would be willing to meet with you and your staff, in future, to discuss the OCDPA, its activities and work and our positions on childhood obesity, poverty and health in Ontario.

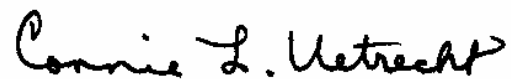
For further information on the OCDPA, its history and mandate, please visit our website at www.ocdpa.on.ca . Our staff can be contacted at 416-367-3313 ext 251 or 225. Linda Stewart can be reached at the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, (416) 595-0006 x 22, or at linda@alphaweb.org. Connie Uetrecht can be reached at the Ontario Public Health Association, (416) 367-3313 x 226, or at cuetrecht@opha.on.ca .

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Linda Stewart,
Co-Chair, OCDPA
Executive Director, aLPHa



Connie Uetrecht.
Co-Chair, OCDPA
Executive Director, OPHA

Cc: Maria Van Brommel, Parliamentary Assistant

Cc: Judith Wright, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Children and Youth Services