



July 21, 2006

The Honourable Jim Watson
Minister of Health Promotion
Ministry of Health Promotion
250 Yonge St. 35th Floor
Toronto, ON M5B 2N5

Dear Minister Watson,

The Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (OCDPA) is encouraged by the recently released "*Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living*." The Plan adds momentum to some recommendations made by Dr. Sheela Basrur in her 2004 "*Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives*" report and will be a catalyst to support the Premier's goal to create a healthier province for all Ontarians.

As I believe you know, the OCDPA, with its extensive membership of chronic disease-focused organizations and key professional organizations, is strategically positioned to help your Ministry move the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) strategy forward. In fact, one of the key strengths of the Alliance is its ability to apply a systems approach across a number of chronic disease risk factors to identify opportunities for integrated planning, coordination and delivery and continuous improvement of health promotion and chronic disease prevention interventions at a population level.

Your announcement in June regarding HEAL was clear in positioning the strategy as a first step. With this in mind, the Alliance will review the strategy over the next couple of months to help inform your Ministry about gaps, challenges and opportunities to enhance implementation of HEAL this year as well as inform planning in the years ahead. Our analysis will also identify where we, as an Alliance, can play a specific role in the successful implementation of HEAL.

We would like to take this opportunity to underline two important factors that must be addressed within the current iteration of HEAL and in future plans.

Firstly, the public health sector and its key role in health promotion and chronic disease prevention will be critical to the success of HEAL. Without a strong public health sector, the sustainability and effectiveness of HEAL will be threatened. The Ministry of Health

and Long-Term Care's recently released *Revitalizing Ontario's Public Health Capacity: The Final Report of the Capacity Review Committee* puts forth recommendations to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of Ontario's public health sector. The OCDPA strongly supports these recommendations and calls for their implementation as soon as possible. We therefore ask you, Minister, to please urge your Cabinet colleagues to move forward with these recommendations quickly. The success of HEAL will benefit from these actions.

The second factor regards determinants of health. The importance of taking into account the social determinants of health is referenced in your HEAL document and we know that certain HEAL initiatives are focused on addressing barriers to health faced by some Ontarians. The OCDPA congratulates you on this important recognition and urges further action in this area. We believe that the Ministry of Health Promotion, as the Ministry charged with preventing disease and promoting health and well-being, is well positioned to be the champion for the integration of the determinants of health in all health-related policy decisions. To date, the analysis to address determinants of health has not been systematically applied. The OCDPA offers you its support in this regard and would welcome an opportunity to discuss how this integration could best happen in the near future.

The OCDPA would be pleased to talk with you and your staff about how the Alliance can best support your Action Plan initiatives and collaborate with Government to strengthen comprehensive chronic disease prevention and related health promotion. In closing, we formally congratulate you on the release of "*Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living*." The programs to be supported under the \$10 million Action Plan this year are a good start. We are looking forward in coming months to hearing more about the short- and long-term funding structures to sustain this important Action Plan.

Sincerely,



Connie Clement
Chair, Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance

cc. *Electronic copies distributed to:*
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