



Ontario Public Health Association
l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
Established/Établi 1949

The mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.

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Constituent Societies

ANDSOOHA – Public Health Nursing
Management in Ontario

Association of Ontario
Health Centres

Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario

Association of Supervisors of Public Health
Inspectors of Ontario

Canadian Institute of Public Health
Inspectors (Ontario Branch)

Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group
(RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario

Ontario Association of Public Health
Dentistry

Ontario Public Health Libraries Association

Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in
Public Health

Public Health Research, Education and
Development (PHRED) Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

March 22nd, 2010

Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario, Queen's Park, Rm 281, Main Legislative
Building
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

Dear Premier

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), and the OPHA Food Security Workgroup (FSWG). OPHA represents over 3,500 public health practitioners through individual memberships and 11 constituent societies. OPHA's mission is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health, and its FSWG advocates for access to affordable, nutritious and personally acceptable foods for all Ontarians.

I am writing with our collective concern about an internal review of the cost of the Special Diet Allowance (SDA) by your government. It is well documented that an investment in healthy food for people with medical conditions will result in cost savings to our health care system. Currently, the SDA provides the additional funding required to purchase nutritious food to improve health.

When reviewing the Special Diet Allowance program, please consider the following:

- Annual reports on the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket have raised significant concerns about the ability of people living in poverty to afford nutritious food. Case scenarios from around the province, discussed in a letter to you on November 18, 2009, indicate a serious and urgent need for renewed efforts by the government and its ministries to ensure that poverty reduction and adequate incomes to pay for rent and healthy food remain a high priority for the government. This will require increases to social assistance rates so all people in Ontario can afford to purchase nutritious food, as well as a fair Special Diet Allowance for those who require a special diet for medical conditions.
- In April 2008, the government's own Special Diet Expert Review Committee recommended significant changes to the SDA which have not yet been implemented.

- The Ontario Human Rights Tribunal found that the SDA program discriminates against people with certain conditions. It ordered Queen's Park to increase payments for three complainants and boost benefits for everyone under similar circumstances within three months.

The relationship between poverty and poor health is clear. Poor nutrition can lead to an increased risk for chronic and infectious diseases, pregnancy outcomes with greater risk for low birth weight and a negative impact on the growth and development of children. It costs more to treat and manage these conditions than to prevent them by ensuring people can afford an adequate diet. Consistent investment in maintaining public health is a pre-requisite for maintaining a population that is prepared for productivity.

For people who already have a medical condition, the Special Diet Allowance is an essential component of social policy in our province. We hope that your attention to this matter will ensure healthier diets for some of the most vulnerable people in our province.

Please contact the Chair of the OPHA Food Security Workgroup to discuss this further: Tracy Woloshyn, 905-895-4512 ext. 4352 or tracy.woloshyn@york.ca.

Sincerely,



Liz Haugh
President

cc. The Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
The Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services