



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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Association of Supervisors of Public
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Canadian Institute of Public Health
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Health Promotion Ontario:
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Ontario Association of Public Health
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Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals
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Public Health Research, Education and
Development (PHRED) Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

College of Nurses of Ontario
101 Davenport Road
Toronto, Ontario
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Attention: Mary Anne Murray, Council President
College of Nurses of Ontario

December 12, 2006

Dear Ms. Murray

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) represents the interests of more than 3,000 community and public health practitioners across Ontario, many of them members of CNO. 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. The Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup of the OPHA focuses on the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.

The OPHA would like to express concern regarding an image in the annual newsletter for the public, *Here for You* 7(1), which "promotes quality nursing care for the people of Ontario". Specifically, our concern is in regard to the picture of the nurse and toddler on page 3, in which the toddler is holding a feeding bottle containing red fluid. Not only does this image fail to promote best practice for toddler nutrition, it is also a direct violation of the World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes (The Code).

It is of critical importance for registered nurses and registered practical nurses in Ontario, particularly those who work in the areas of maternal and child health, to be knowledgeable about the many benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and children, and of the risks related to not breastfeeding. Unfortunately, the image we are referring to does not reflect nurses' commitment to best practice and gives the public the impression that nursing condones this inappropriate practice.

The Code is a set of recommendations to regulate the marketing of breast milk substitutes, feeding bottles and teats, and aims to contribute "to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants, by the protection and promotion of

breastfeeding, and by ensuring the proper use of breast milk substitutes, when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution.” (The Code, Article 1)

The Code aims to ensure that families make informed choices regarding infant feeding practices. The Code states that there should be no advertising of breast milk substitutes to the public, and no promotion of such products through the health care system or health care providers. While advocating that babies be breastfed, The Code acknowledges that if babies are not breastfed, they should be fed safely with the best available nutritional alternative (World Health Organization, 2006).

The depiction of a toddler with a bottle of red fluid violates The Code in several ways. The bottle itself is a concern. The Code clearly indicates that health professionals and professional organizations should not depict bottle feeding as the normal way to feed a child. Such imagery undermines breastfeeding as the normal and optimal feeding method for infants and young children, and sends the subtle message that the College of Nurses of Ontario endorses the use of feeding bottles for toddler nutrition.

As well, if a toddler is not receiving breast milk, whole cow’s milk is generally recommended in its place after one year of age, and would be the best nutritional alternative to breast milk. The red fluid in the bottle resembles juice, and juice is not recommended as an appropriate nutritional choice for regular toddler intake. Too much juice may cause diarrhea, decrease a child’s appetite and consumption of nutritious foods, and contribute to early childhood tooth decay (Canadian Pediatric Society, 2006). Juice, if introduced, should be limited to no more than 4 to 6 ounces per day and only be consumed from a cup (American Dental Association, 2006).

It must also be noted that public health units across Ontario, as well as the Canadian Pediatric Society and other professional organizations, recommend that children no longer use a bottle after 12 to 15 months of age. Prolonged use of a teat and bottle, especially with fruit juices or sugar-sweetened drinks, may lead to severe and rapid tooth decay due to the continuous bathing of the tooth enamel with sugars (American Dental Association, 2006). A College of Nurses of Ontario publication depicting a toddler with a bottle of coloured liquid in it sends the wrong message to health professionals and the public regarding appropriate toddler feeding practice.

The College of Nurses of Ontario has a unique opportunity to positively influence the image of nurses to the public. The OPHA encourages the College of Nurses of Ontario to adhere to the WHO Code, to ensure the protection and promotion of optimal feeding for infants and young children.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Gary Aslanyan, President

Cc: Debra Jones, Manager, Communications Department, CNO