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August 22, 2003

**To: The Honourable Tony Clement
Minister of Health and Long Term Care**

Re: 2003 Ministers of Health Meeting

Dear Minister Clement:

On behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association, I am writing to call your attention to three important issues planned for discussion at the Ministers of Health Meeting in Halifax, September 2 - 4, 2003.

Public Health Infrastructure

Immediately invest \$1 billion in local public health operations, and implement a strategy to double spending over the next five years. Establish a pan Canadian public health system that begins with the creation of a National Institute of Public Health, led by a Chief Public Health Officer.

The challenge is to build capacity. We know that public health approaches are required to address issues such as SARS that affect entire groups and populations, and that personal health approaches cannot do so. The attention given to personal health care over the past decades has taken focus away from the basics of public health, and as a result the system is crumbling. Canada and Ontario cannot be sufficiently protected against infectious disease, nor from the emerging pressures of chronic diseases such as cancer and diabetes unless enhance capacity is built. Leadership in the form of an arms-length agency with regional presence and credible public health staff is required.

Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy

Endorse and commit the required resources to implement the Healthy Living Strategy

Since the F/T/P Ministers of Health meeting in September 2002 there has been excellent progress on the pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy. At your meeting, you will receive the resulting

recommendations for approval. The Ontario Public Health Association has previously sent you a letter requesting your approval of those recommendations. It is important that you endorse this good work by supporting the framework and also ensuring that there is the required immediate and sustained financial support to implement the strategy.

National Health Council

Support the early implementation of the National Health Council, as recommended by Commissioner Roy Romanow, and ensure public health has proportionate representation.

The future of public health and the health system in Canada depends upon striking an appropriate balance between investments in prevention and health maintenance and those directed to care and treatment. It is our view that the Health Council should be comprised of individuals who represent this balance of perspectives, skills and knowledge so that it can, in a transparent fashion, establish benchmarks, collect information and report publicly on efforts to improve quality, access and outcomes from our health system.

Your attention is needed now to build our public health capacity, stem the burden of costs with the implementation of the pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy, and move forward on the Health Council.

We look forward to working further with you to create a healthy and prosperous future for all Canadians.

Sincerely

Connie L. Uetrecht
President, OPHA

c.c.: Dr. Colin D'Cunha
Federal Minister of Health, Anne McClellan