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Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

June 28, 2004

Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier
Room 281 Legislative Building
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier,

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) congratulates you for your decision to allocate an additional four million dollars for school-based children's breakfast programs in Ontario. We share your appreciation of the health and educational benefits these programs promote in students who participate. In order to be assured of the most positive use of this additional funding, the OPHA respectfully makes the following suggestions:

1. Money needed to fund programs for the coming school year (2004-5) should be directed as soon as possible to Breakfast for Learning. This will minimize confusion among all of the organizations that work in the field of breakfast programs, provide adequate time to alert all stakeholders about any impending changes, and ensure that there will be no disruption of funding to the many organizations that operate on limited budgets. This suggestion in no way implies either support of or opposition to Breakfast for Learning's continuing role in delivering nutrition program funding.
2. There needs to be a consensus on the principles that guide the selection of the best vehicle for delivering the funding to school nutrition programs, as well as the best agency and process for making that selection. By developing a list of criteria for selecting the most appropriate delivery vehicle, we can advance a consensus on crucial policy matters that can guide longer-term thinking about school nutrition program strategies. For example, one important criterion would be that the agency has a provincial mandate.
3. Once a consensus has been developed about the principles to guide identification and selection of the best delivery vehicle over the longer term (by September 30, 2004), the relevant people (also identified in the consensus report) should post the selection criteria, sponsor a Request for Proposals process, and make the selection (by December 31, 2004).
4. In the time period between selection of the delivery vehicle and allocation of moneys for the new funding year (2005-6),

5. consensus needs to be established on the criteria for making a performance evaluation of the way provincial funding is spent: what are the best ways for ensuring that quality control standards and accountability are secured for public tax dollars. Agencies provided with funding should be advised of these criteria, and asked to cooperate with the collection of data that make the performance evaluation possible.

If it would be helpful to advance this process, the OPHA would like to offer its services to help organize the meeting(s) at which the above decisions would be made. OPHA is province-wide, has expertise in nutrition and health, and enjoys respect and credibility among the general public and stakeholder groups for that expertise. OPHA members are well-connected in their professions and communities, and can bring resources from many groups to the deliberations. No OPHA member has any position that might constitute or imply any conflict of interest that might run contrary to the needs of healthy students. If you are interested in partnering with OPHA on this process, please contact Ellen Desjardins, Chair, OPHA Food Security Workgroup at (519) 883-2004, ext. 5166, or Tracy Woloshyn, Member, OPHA Food Security Workgroup at (905) 895-4512, ext. 4352.

Sincerely,

Dr. Peter Wiebe
President, Ontario Public Health Association

cc. Hon. Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, Minister of Children's Services
Hon. Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education
Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Shafiq Qadri, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children's Services
Richard Patten, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education
Jim Brownell, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Peter Fonseca, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Monique Smith, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care