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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:
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Ontario Association of Public Health
Dentistry

Ontario Public Health Libraries
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Ontario Society of Nutrition
Professionals in Public Health

Public Health Research, Education
and Development (PHRED)
Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

March 21, 2002

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

Dear Minister Clement:

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and our constituent societies wish to add our voice to the widespread public support for the recommendations in Part 1 of the Report of the Walkerton Inquiry. We commend the government of Ontario on its commitment to implementing the recommended improvements to drinking water protection programs, and we wish to offer our expertise and assistance in accomplishing this task.

OPHA, along with the Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors (ASPHIO), and the Ontario Branch of the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI(O)) joined forces with the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) to form a Public Health Coalition that was granted status at the Inquiry. Together we also look forward to the Part 2 report and to re-examining further the roles of our member professionals and constituent societies.

In Part 1 of his report Justice Dennis O'Connor makes a number of recommendations regarding public and community health. We are aware that your staff in the Public Health Branch are currently working on a review of the Safe Water program of the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines, and related initiatives such as developing a Boil Water Protocol (recommendations 7 and 8). If we can be of assistance in this regard, please contact me through the OPHA offices at the telephone number below.

The mission of OPHA is to strengthen the impact of people who are active in community and public health throughout Ontario. We achieve this through education, advocacy, issue identification, public health expertise, and consultation in public and community health. OPHA represents the collective interests of approximately 3,000 individuals in public and community health through individual and constituent society memberships.

We believe that the Walkerton Inquiry demonstrated the value of a strong public health mandate in overseeing and safeguarding the provision of drinking water in this province. Without the swift action of the Medical Officer of Health for the Grey Bruce Health Unit, with

support from public health professionals in that and other health units in Ontario, the number of cases and toll of human suffering might have been far greater.

We therefore agree with and support Justice O'Conner's recommendations that the role of Medical Officers of Health and health units with respect to treated and untreated municipal drinking water systems be clarified and strengthened (recommendation 3). We also agree that periodic assessments of the extent of health unit compliance with the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines, and the adequacy of resources allocated to this purpose, should be conducted by your Ministry (recommendation 2).

We would add that there are other categories of public water supplies that the provincial government would do well to consider carefully during the promulgation of regulations and guidelines (e.g. small water systems serving less than five residences, private water systems servicing public premises such as trailer parks, other recreational facilities, churches).

In closing, we would reiterate our support for early implementation of the Walkerton Inquiry recommendations and offer the resources and expertise of our association toward that end.

Sincerely,

Connie Uetrecht
President, OPHA