

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ministry's Active Living Strategy a step in the right direction

Toronto, June 21, 2006 – The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) welcomes the province's new strategy to improve the health of Ontario's families. *Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living*, unveiled yesterday by Ontario Minister of Health Promotion Jim Watson, builds on the foundation of the Chief Medical Officer of Health's 2004 Report *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives*, which was released at that year's OPHA Conference.

Many of the measures are directed at children and youth, including the provision of Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables to pilot schools in Northern Ontario, supports for and recognition of healthy schools, and promotion of active and safe routes to school.

OPHA houses and manages several provincial health promotion resource centres and projects – including the Heart Health Resource Centre and the Nutrition Resource Centre, which coordinates the provincial Eat Smart! Program. With these programs and its ongoing policy and advocacy work, OPHA has been supporting the types of initiatives in the province's Action Plan for many years.

"The blend of direct service provision, community planning and health promotion is right on target for building healthier communities," said Dr. Garry Aslanyan, OPHA President. "We are especially pleased to see the government recognize the value of the Eat Smart! Program, and will work with them as the program expands to bring healthy food choices into more venues than ever before."

OPHA Executive Director Connie Uetrecht pointed to the new web- and phone-based province-wide dietitian advisory service and the fostering of learning and innovation as two more steps to healthy living in Ontario. "These recommendations are all important pieces of a package that, if implemented in its entirety, can certainly have a very positive impact on the health of Ontarians," she added. "OPHA is excited by the possibilities built into this plan."

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Founded in 1949, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a voluntary, charitable, non-profit association. OPHA is an organization of individuals and ten Constituent Societies from various sectors and disciplines that have an interest in improving the health of the people of Ontario. For more details visit www.opha.on.ca.

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