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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:
Public Health

Ontario Association of Public Health
Dentistry

Ontario Public Health Libraries
Association

Ontario Society of Nutrition
Professionals in Public Health

Public Health Research, Education
and Development (PHRED)
Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

October 23, 2003

**To: The Honourable George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care**

Dear Mr. Smitherman:

On behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), we are writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We also wish to offer our support and commitment to work with you as you move forward in achieving the health agenda as outlined in the Liberal platform.

OPHA has been the voice of public health in Ontario since 1949. Its mission 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. OPHA represents over 3000 public health practitioners through individual memberships and 10 constituent societies.

Fundamental to the work of OPHA is the recognition that to have a healthier Ontario, attention must be paid to the broader determinants of health. As such, we strongly support the public health focus which is evident in the Liberal platform. A healthy Ontario requires better education, better access to housing, security and income and cleaner environments.

OPHA applauds the new administration for its focus on Public Health in such areas as expectant mothers, mandatory physical activity in schools, improved air quality, appropriate alcohol consumption and workplace health. OPHA has the active engagement of over 150 volunteers on 10 work groups as well as several long-standing projects that it manages across Ontario. The work within OPHA addresses many of the issues raised in the Liberal platform. For example, the environmental workgroup has among its focus air and water quality; the child health workgroup is interested in improving the health of children through initiatives such as vaccines for chicken pox and meningitis; the same workgroup along with the breastfeeding workgroup are working on better peri-natal care for new and expectant moms. The Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition, originally founded as a workgroup and still

strongly supported by OPHA, has been a leader in establishing the concept of healthy schools for our children.

Among the OPHA projects are the Nutrition Resource Centre, the Heart Health Resource Centre, the Air Quality project and two initiatives aimed at appropriate alcohol consumption. Each of these resources is focused on some part of the Liberal platform and these resources are available to you to achieve the goals of the platform.

There are tremendous pressures on the health system today. As a result, significant changes need to be made in our approaches to achieving improved health for all Ontarians. Appropriate strategies will achieve affordable results. For example, the platform's attention to expectant mothers: we know that the simple investment of \$100-150 in each expectant mother who is at risk for having a low birth weight baby results in lowering the rate for that mother to the general average. Each low birth weight prevented saves the system over \$600,000 in medical and hospital costs over a lifetime. We believe that financial stability in healthcare will never be achieved unless we are able to focus sharply, as a society, on public health issues.

Like Ontario, OPHA is in transition with an imminent change in its Executive Director. As both the present Executive Director and the in-coming Executive Director, we are writing to request an early meeting with you to discuss how we may work with you to achieve the goals of the new government and those of OPHA: improved health of Ontarians within a sustainable health system.

We will also be meeting with Ministry officials and staff to discuss strategies that will allow incremental implementation of your government's agenda.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jack Lee, Executive Director
David MacKinnon, incoming Executive Director