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Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

March 8th, 2011

Dr. Arlene King
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Division, MOHLTC
80 Grosvenor St., 11th Floor Hepburn Block
Toronto, ON M7A 1R3

Dear Dr. King,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), we would like to commend you on the recently released 2009 Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Annual Report. It was encouraging to see our public health challenges framed broadly from a social determinants of health perspective. In order to be comprehensive, a public health strategy must address all the risk factors that impact population health, prioritize interventions based on the burden of illness and include cross-sectoral and cross-governmental contributors to public health.

Below is a summary of specific public health related actions that we believe would advance the achievement of the public health goals outlined in our Ontario Public Health Standards.

Tobacco Policy

The Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group's (TSAG) report released in October of 2010 provides a comprehensive 5 year action plan to continue the strategic war on tobacco. OPHA supports the full adoption of the TSAG recommendations which reflect the consensus of Ontario's leaders in tobacco control.

Food Insecurity

While OPHA supports the reduction of obesity and physical inactivity as provincial priorities, any action to support health weights must also address the issues of food security. Food insecurity and hunger have negative impacts on health, quality of life and health care costs. Low incomes and economic barriers are the most common cause of household food insecurity for Ontarians. A multi-sectoral food strategy should be developed to actively improve access to affordable, healthy food in underserved neighbourhoods. A focus on the built environment as an enabler of physical activity can be supported through establishment of an inter-ministerial committee with representatives from the Ministries of Health Promotion and Support, Health and Long-term Care, Transportation, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Education and the environment.

Early Childhood Development

We applaud you for recognizing the paramount importance of healthy child development and, given the greater vulnerability and childhood burden of illness related to exposures in our build environments, would encourage sustained attention to children's environmental health. Given the burden of illness associated with environmental health, we look forward to environmental health – including the topics of environmental hazards, unhealthy housing, and unhealthy air quality – being recognized as a determinant of health similar to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, along with the identification of an *environmental health* theme in future Ontario reports.

Alcohol Policy

The World Health Organization has recently elevated alcohol to a global priority due to the harms and proven interventions associated with it. The costs attributed to alcohol far outweigh the economic benefit through sales when considering enforcement and hospital costs, resulting in an approximate deficit of \$456 million per year in Ontario. These alcohol-related costs increase each year; now almost on par with costs associated with tobacco. Alcohol would therefore be best recognized broadly for its prominent role in injury prevention, costs to society, mental health issues, and other public health areas and receive more of a focus in future reports. Provinces including Nova Scotia and British Columbia have highlighted the harms and effective interventions associated with alcohol through introducing provincial alcohol strategies. Similar to the 2007 Injury Prevention Strategy, Ontario is encouraged to engage in a similar process in creating a *Provincial Alcohol Strategy*.

Violence Prevention

We commend your fellow Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport for creating and implementing a provincial Injury Prevention Strategy. Although unintentional injury prevention has received notable attention within the strategy and CMOH report; recognition of intentional injuries such as youth violence, domestic violence, and community safety issues would be welcomed in future reports.

Thank you again for your attention to these raised issues. We are encouraged by the enhanced profile of public health in this province and look forward to working with government and those in the public health community to move public health forward. We share your belief that public health is *everyone's business* and look forward to working together to achieve the best health outcomes for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Liz Haugh
President