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ANDSOOHA – Public Health
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Association of Ontario
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Community Health Nurses'
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Health Promotion Ontario

Ontario Association of Public
Health Dentistry

*Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001*

February 25, 2015

Brian Fraser
Food Banks Canada
5025 Orbitor Drive
Building 2, Suite 400
Mississauga, ON L4W 4Y5

Dear Mr. Fraser,

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) Breastfeeding Promotion Network is a group of public health professionals who work collaboratively to promote and support breastfeeding in Ontario through the implementation of evidence-based practice and support for healthy public policy.

As an organization that is committed to meeting people's short term need for food and finding longer term solutions, we wanted to make sure you are aware of the benefits of breastfeeding, the value of promoting and making it the easiest choice, and actions that can undermine it.

All Canadian Public Health Agencies, the Canadian Paediatric Society, Health Canada and the World Health Organization recognize the importance of breastfeeding for the nutrition, immunologic protection, growth, and development of infants and toddlers. They recommend that all mothers breastfeed exclusively for the first six months, and sustain breastfeeding for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding. As well as the nutritional, emotional and developmental benefits, breastfeeding offers the advantage of being free. Surprisingly, research indicates that women with lower social economic status are less likely to breastfeed despite the numerous benefits.

We understand the value and importance of partnerships and collaboration for supporting food banks and food bank networks to meet the needs of our communities. However, we are concerned that partnering with formula companies could compromise the promotion of breastfeeding in vulnerable populations that have the most to gain by initiating and sustaining breastfeeding.

We would be pleased to offer ideas and work with your organization on strategies to support the feeding choices of the families you serve while helping to reduce the commercial pressures they may experience when free formula is readily available.

As public health and hospitals in Ontario commit to enhancing breastfeeding and supporting families that have made an informed decision to formula feed, we would welcome the chance to explore ways to promote optimal nutrition support for all families. I will be contacting your office to see whether a call can be arranged in the near future to discuss possible opportunities for collaboration.

Respectfully,

Catharine Lowes

RN BScN IBCLC (RLC)
on behalf of the OPHA Breastfeeding Promotion Network
~BFI Coordinator~
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