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June 1, 2005

Dr. Sheela Basrur
Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
Hepburn Block - 11th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 1R3

Dear Dr. Basrur:

The OPHA Board would like to bring forth another important issue for discussion with you when we have an opportunity for a face-to-face dialogue. The issue is the decreased attention being given to family and children health programming. Historically and until recently, public health expertise has had a strong prevention and promotion emphasis on supporting families with children – from preconception and on through the adolescent years. This focus has included such practical programs and services as parenting, post-partum support groups, breastfeeding promotion campaigns, dental screening, prenatal education, school curriculum development, pregnancy prevention initiatives to name only a few. Although the community need for these remain, and in some instances is growing, these have become increasingly invisible in the context of public health renewal initiatives.

At our meeting we are requesting to follow up on the inter-ministerial meeting we had with Dr. Sandra Bennett to further discuss the role of prevention and promotion in the context of family health in a revitalized public health system. We know you are supportive of this pillar of public health and would like to dialogue with you as to how we might restore balance into the current public health discussions.

Another suggestion we will be asking you to consider is making the topic for your next CMOH Report on Child and Youth Health. Perhaps a child health report card format and the actual and potential role of public health expertise might be an avenue to discuss the ongoing and long-term impact public health initiatives have on communities across the province.

Secondly, we would like to discuss the vision for the future of child and family health within a renewed public health system. Within that discussion we would seek to find ways in which we might support you in confirming and promoting the role public health plays in supporting family and child health in Ontario.

OPHA has many items to discuss with you; we hope that this topic will be one that prompts a good discuss soon. We are available early in the morning or in the evening hours as this and other issue is of significant concern to much of our membership.

Sincerely,

Dr. Garry Aslanyan
President, Ontario Public Health Association