



June 15, 2018

Dr. Bob Bell, Deputy Minister
Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Greg Meredith, Deputy Minister
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs

Bruce Rodrigues, Deputy Minister
Ontario Ministry of Education

Nancy Matthews, Deputy Minister
Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services

Dear Deputy Ministers,

On behalf of Dietitians of Canada (Ontario), Ontario Dietitians in Public Health and the Ontario Public Health Association, we would like to call your attention to the report, "[Creating healthier food environments in Canada: Current policies and priority actions, Ontario Fall 2017](#)" as it offers evidence-based recommendations that can improve the food environment and eating behaviours of Ontarians.

This report, part of a national Food-EPI Canada study led by Dr. Lana Vanderlee and Dr. Mary L'Abbé at the University of Toronto, evaluated provincial government policies and actions to create a healthier food environment and outlined some 38 recommendations to address policy gaps in Ontario. We would value the opportunity to meet with senior members of your team in order to explore ways that we could leverage our combined expertise and resources with those of your respective ministries to improve the food environment and health of Ontarians.

Together, our three long-standing organizations represent over 5,000 Registered Dietitians and public health professionals working in health promotion across Ontario who provide extensive expertise, evidence and practice-based knowledge to support nutrition-related healthy public policies.

Given the disturbing health trends resulting from unhealthy food environments and eating behaviours, collaborative action is urgently needed to address these alarming trends. The eight recommendations highlighted below were prioritized by the research team based on importance and achievability and

provide us with a useful roadmap to move forward together. The priority areas for action include the following:

Policy Areas:

1. Update the Healthy Menu Choices Act to provide additional information for sodium on menus, and implement a comprehensive menu labelling education campaign. In addition, require chain food service providers to fully disclose amounts of calories and the 13 core nutrients found on the Nutrition Facts table per serving size in an online format.
2. Implement a tax on all sugar sweetened beverages, as defined by comprehensive, evidence based nutrient profiling criteria. Invest the revenue from the tax to targeted areas that address public health as appropriate to provincial context, and advertise the re-investment of the tax dollars to the public.
3. Develop and implement clear, consistent policies including public procurement standards to provide and promote healthy food choices in food service activities (cafeterias, vending machines, food at events, fundraising, promotions, etc.) in public sector settings under provincial control (long term care facilities, hospitals, schools, recreation centres, correctional services, etc.).
4. Evaluate what is currently in school curricula regarding food literacy and food skills training, and require this as a mandatory component of primary and secondary school education.

Infrastructure Supports:

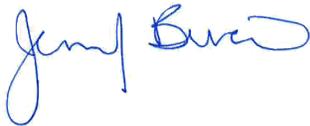
1. Acknowledge and endorse the importance of provincial public health nutrition and obesity and chronic disease prevention strategies.
2. Continue to support the Healthy Kids Community Challenge and invest in additional themes that promote healthy eating behaviours.
3. Create a multi-sectoral government body that includes participation from civil society to support and sustain the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy.
4. Increase access to reliable, evidence-based nutrition information and education about healthy eating led by dietitians.

Many of these recommendations are supportive of actions already being undertaken by local public health agencies implementing [Ontario Public Health Standards \(2018\)](#). They are also supportive of recommendations made in the [Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy](#) and align with the Federal Government's [Healthy Eating Strategy](#). These proposed policy actions can also be used to help inform the direction of [A Food Policy for Canada](#) to meaningfully incorporate healthy eating and healthy food environment interventions into provincial and national food policies.

As organizations with food and nutrition policy expertise, we recognize the importance of cross-ministry collaborative action to promote health and well-being and reduce the burden of diet-related diseases on Ontarians and Ontario's healthcare system. We look forward to meeting with members of your team to explore how we could work more closely with key ministries such as yours to effect change as you work with the new government on their priorities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



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[Dietitians of Canada \(DC\)](#) is the professional association representing almost 6,000 members at the local, provincial and national levels with regional offices in British Columbia, Alberta and the Territories, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Our purpose is to advance health through food and nutrition. We provide evidence-based food and nutrition information, support easier access to adequate, safe and healthy food, promote professional best practices, and advocate for better access to dietitians to meet the health needs of Canadians.

The [Ontario Dietitians in Public Health \(ODPH\)](#) (formerly the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health) is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system. ODPH provides leadership in public health nutrition by promoting and supporting member collaboration to improve the health of Ontario residents.

Created in 1949, the [Ontario Public Health Association \(OPHA\)](#) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that brings together a broad spectrum of groups and individuals concerned about people's health. OPHA's members are united in providing leadership, which is achieved through information and analysis on issues affecting community and public health, access to multidisciplinary networks, advocacy on health public policy, the provision of expertise and consultation, and professional development. The Nutrition Resource Centre has been part of OPHA since 1999.

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