



Ontario Public Health Association
 l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
 Established/Établi 1949

The mission of OPHA 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.

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May 26, 2009

Peggy Govers RN MScN
 Chair, Infant Feeding Survey Collaborative
 Manager, Family Health Service
 Child Health Program
 Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
 15 Sperling Dr.
 Barrie, ON L4M 6K9

Dear Peggy:

Re: Request for Funding, Infant Feeding Survey Collaborative

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) represents the interests of more than 3,000 community and public health practitioners across Ontario. The mission of OPHA 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. The Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup of the OPHA focuses on the promotion, support and advocacy for breastfeeding.

Health Canada guidelines for infant feeding recommend exclusive breastfeeding to six months, and continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond, with the introduction of nutrient-rich complementary foods at six months, with particular attention to iron.¹

Additionally, although epidemiological evidence shows that exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months has both short and long term advantages for infants and mothers², optimal breastfeeding initiation and duration rates have not been achieved in Ontario or Canada.

¹ Health Canada, Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion (2004). *Exclusive Breastfeeding Duration*, Publication No: 4824

² Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (2003). *Breastfeeding Best Practices Guidelines for Nurses*. Author

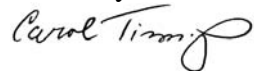
Public health professionals must have current information on infant feeding practices to plan and effectively tailor programs, services and supports to the needs of local parents and priority populations.

The proposed Infant Feeding Survey will provide real information about whether parents in each health unit area are following Health Canada's recommendations, and will help to determine what their information and support needs may be. Having information from the same mothers at three separate time periods, as described in the methodology of the survey, will allow investigation of the duration of breastfeeding and other infant feeding practices, and the timing of shifts in infant feeding practices (e.g. from breast to complementary foods).

The Ontario Public Health Standards 2008 require health units to monitor trends over time, emerging trends and priority populations on a variety of topics, including breastfeeding. .

To this end, the OPHA Breastfeeding Promotion Workgroup fully supports the project proposed by the Infant Feeding Survey Collaborative. The Workgroup gives permission for you to include this letter of support with any request for funding proposals submitted by the Infant Feeding Survey Collaborative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Timmings".

Carol Timmings
President