



**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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**Constituent Societies**

- Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC)
- Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO)
- Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario (ASPHIO)
- Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (Ontario Branch) (CIPHIO)
- Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group (RNAO)
- Health Promotion Ontario (HPO)
- Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry (OAPHD)
- Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH)
- The Ontario Association of Public Health Nursing Leaders, (OAPHNL)

Charitable Registration  
 Number 11924 8771 RR0001

May 4, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Leal  
 Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
 77 Grenville Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 Toronto, ON, M7A 1B3

Dear Minister Leal,

**RE: Next Agricultural Policy Framework**

On behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association, I wanted to congratulate you and your Ministry for encouraging innovation, competitiveness and market development in Canada's agri-food and agri-products sector through the Growing Forward Program. As I understand you will be meeting soon with your federal, provincial and territorial colleagues as well as Ontario's agri-food stakeholders, I wanted to convey some suggestions as you consider the next phase of this national program.

OPHA has been championing the notion of Health In All Policies and calling on Ontario ministries to assess the health impact of their measures to ensure governmental policies and programs support the health and wellbeing of our citizens. Consequently, we urge you to place an emphasis on the importance of Ontarians choosing and having access to healthy and nutritious foods as you develop the next phase of Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework.

Healthy diets and optimal nutrition are recognized as a key factors contributing to overall health and wellbeing and reduced rates of chronic diseases, including diabetes and obesity. In light of this fact, we call on your Ministry to ensure that programs, businesses and initiatives funded under the Next Agricultural Policy Framework support improved access to healthy and nutritious foods across the province, including Canada's north. Financial and geographical barriers can prevent Ontarians from accessing food, let alone local food. Hence, we recommend that the new framework prioritize making healthy foods financially and geographically accessible.

As the host of the Nutrition Resource Centre (NRC), OPHA works to strengthen the capacity of health promotion professionals and community partners involved with food, healthy eating and nutrition across the province. The NRC recently worked with the Ministry of

Children and Youth Services to update Ontario's Student Nutrition Program Guidelines, and is currently undertaking a project to adapt these guidelines for Ontario's Indigenous communities. The NRC also works closely with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to support the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, an initiative of the Healthy Kids Community Strategy.

As the past coordinator of the province-wide Community Food Advisor program and a partner in the creation of Ontario's Food and Nutrition Strategy—a stakeholder-led and evidence-informed draft provincial food and nutrition strategy—the OPHA recognizes the importance of food literacy and knowledge when it comes to making healthier food choices. Therefore, we ask that the Next Agricultural Policy Framework also prioritize increasing *food literacy and healthy food knowledge* among all Ontarians. Programs and investments in nutrition programming are important and should not be overlooked when it comes to improving the long-term health of our citizens—including the most vulnerable.

We are encouraged by the work underway to develop this new Framework and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with your ministry on strategies to support Ontarians having greater access to healthy and local foods and knowledge surrounding health and nutrition.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ellen Wodchis  
President, OPHA

### **About OPHA**

*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 come from various backgrounds and sectors— from the various disciplines in public health, health care, academic, non-profit to the private sector. They are united by OPHA's mission of providing leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthening the impact of people active in public and community health throughout Ontario. This mission is achieved through professional development, information and analysis on issues effecting community and public health, access to multidisciplinary networks, advocacy on health public policy and the provision of expertise and consultation.*