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Constituent Societies

ANDSOOHA – Public Health Nursing
Management in Ontario

Association of Ontario
Health Centres

Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario

Association of Supervisors of Public Health
Inspectors of Ontario

Canadian Institute of Public Health
Inspectors (Ontario Branch)

Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group
(RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario:
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Ontario Association of Public Health
Dentistry

Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in
Public Health

Public Health Research, Education and
Development (PHRED) Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

December 21st, 2007

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

Dear Premier:

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) to offer a perspective from the Public Health sector, as your government moves forward with plans to implement a new dental health program.

Consistent with our mission to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health in Ontario, OPHA considers it important that this program reflect best practises in healthy public policy in order to best serve the needs of Ontarians. As you know, OPHA has had a significant impact on the progress that has been made in the development of Public Health and Community Health in Ontario since 1949. Our membership encompasses the whole spectrum of professional and volunteer practitioners who are committed to, and active in, promoting Public Health and Community Health throughout Ontario.

Recognizing the growing need to address the policy issues related to access to dental care and prevention services in Ontario, OPHA initiated an analysis of the topic at its November 2007 Conference in Toronto. We gathered a unique and diverse panel—front-line community workers, anti-poverty advocates, media representatives, public health dentists and researchers working on the social determinants of health—and discussed the impact of poverty on general health and highlighted the effect of poverty on oral health.

The panellists, and other participants, confirmed that an increasing number of Ontarians—especially the working poor—cannot afford private dental care. Your government's promise to create a \$45 million-a-year dental care program for the working poor was welcomed.

However, it is important that as this program is developed, flexible mechanisms are utilized to ensure that dental care is accessible to those in need. Many of our colleagues working in remote and northern communities, as well as urban areas, consistently confirm the need for this program to engage Community Health Centres (CHCs), Public Health Units, Seniors' Residences and other community settings. This will ensure that the needs of local communities are carefully considered as the program reaches out to people who do not have easy access dental care and prevention services.

Again, we would like to applaud your government's plan to expand oral health and dental care services and we encourage all departments responsible for this program to work closely with the OPHA and other public health stakeholders to implement a cost-effective program that reflects the needs of the communities in Ontario.

A stronger Ontario is a healthier Ontario. A stronger Ontario also requires innovation. This program provides a great opportunity to create a mechanism that could become a model for future Ontario programs as well as for other provinces and the country. I would like to invite you to contact OPHA to discuss this opportunity further.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Dr. Garry Aslanyan

c.c:

Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance

Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion

Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services and Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs

Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues

Honourable Aileen Carroll, Minister of Culture and Minister Responsible for Seniors

Donald Russell, President, Ontario Dental Association (ODA)

Adrianna Tetley, Executive Director, Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC)

Donna Bowes, President, Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry (OAPHD)

Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)