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Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

February 9, 2004

To: Hon. George Smitherman
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for Ontario
Hepburn Block
10th Floor , 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto Ontario M7A 2C4

Dear Mr. Smitherman:

I am writing on behalf of the Chronic Disease Alliance of Ontario, which is a network of organizations devoted to the fight against chronic diseases. Members include the Canadian Cancer Society, The Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Diabetes Association and many others. A complete listing is attached

At a recent meeting, members asked that I write to you on several subjects.

First, members of the alliance are delighted with the views expressed by you on public health issues in a recent interview with the Globe and Mail. All of us recognize the importance of your comments, not only for their intrinsic merit, but also because you have highlighted the value of increased emphasis on public health as a principal means to address unsustainable costs in the treatment system. We applaud you for this and we want to assist in any way possible.

Second, at a recent meeting our members examined data on chronic disease impact. It is clear that within a few years it will simply not be possible, under any conditions, to manage the health system impact of these diseases and the costs associated with them. Accordingly, we feel that we need to act together and very urgently to deal much more effectively with the root causes of these illnesses. We intend to produce a new strategic vision of how to do this over the course of the next month and we will make it available to you at that time. We hope our suggestions will serve as a catalyst for decisions on a problem which would make any list of the half dozen most important issues on the public agenda in Ontario.

Third, and finally, our members have heard your messages and those of Mr. Sorbara clearly. While there will be funding needs associated with any efforts to enhance public health, we will examine possible ways to deliver programs in innovative ways and we will try to limit

new financial requests to an absolute minimum. The good news is that the financial effort needed to improve public health will be far smaller than the increases associated with the treatment system and will constitute the essential first step to enable eventual reductions in the costs associated with treatment for chronic diseases in physician's offices and in hospitals.

Again, all members of our alliance want me to express our appreciation of your understanding of and focus on public health issues.

Sincerely,

David MacKinnon
Executive Director

Cc: Dr. Peter Wiebe, President, OPHA
Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance
Phil Hassen, Deputy Minister of Health
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Members of the Alliance