



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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June 5, 2009

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Room 281
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier:

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) applauds the commitment of your government to the implementation of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and Strategy (SFOS). We are pleased to be part of the recent stakeholder table established by the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) to continue to strengthen and reshape SFOS. We would like to work with you, the MHP and other stakeholders to ensure that we maintain the momentum in our fight against tobacco use, as tobacco products remain the number one cause of preventable death in Ontario.

Despite substantial government investment in tobacco control, challenges remain in areas such as smoking cessation, inadequate tobacco taxation, and measures to address contraband cigarettes. There is concern in the public health community about the recent provincial funding cuts to tobacco control and OPHA urges your government to maintain a level of financial investment which will support our ability to effectively implement tobacco prevention strategies and to sustain effective youth engagement approaches.

OPHA is very supportive of your government's emphasis on health promotion and your commitment to support the implementation of the new strategic plan in the MHP. At this time of global economic challenge, governments must invest in disease prevention efforts in order to achieve positive health outcomes for Ontarians.

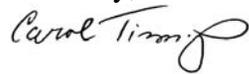
In particular, our Association endorses the MHP's direction to look for opportunities to enhance cohesive and integrative chronic disease prevention strategies. The recently announced healthy communities focus and integrated planning at the community level will broaden partnership opportunities and leverage resources.

There is growing evidence across Canadian jurisdictions and internationally that an integrated approach to chronic disease prevention can be effective. This integration of common risk factors for major chronic diseases through approaches that promote and support healthy living serve to consolidate currently fragmented or isolated health promotion and disease prevention efforts. Some communities across Ontario have already experienced success in their integrative efforts at the local level. However, it is also evident that not all chronic disease prevention interventions are amenable or effective when integrated, and this will require that certain single-risk factor interventions be maintained in an effort to achieve desired health outcomes.

In support of the MHP's healthy communities focus, OPHA will encourage communities to apply for the Healthy Communities Fund. The development of integrated youth-led initiatives through this fund can build upon the recent successes of the Tobacco Youth Action Alliances across Ontario. OPHA will utilize our existing relationships with the Heart Health Resource Centre, Chronic Disease Prevention Managers in public health organizations, and the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance towards this end. We believe that it is critical to continue the youth engagement momentum within the community and to sustain a level of financial investment in future programs, particularly for youth most at risk.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the MHP in both strengthening the SFOS and making Ontario a world-wide leader in chronic disease prevention.

Sincerely,



Carol Timmings
President

cc: The Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Ms. Cynthia Morton, Deputy Minister of Health Promotion
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Acting)