

2/1/2006

Hon. Jim Watson
Minister of Health Promotion /
Chair, Interministerial Committee on Healthy Living
250 Yonge Street
35th Floor
Toronto, ON M5B 2N5

Honourable Minister,

Re. alPHa Resolutions for Consideration by the Interministerial Committee on Healthy Living

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), I am taking this opportunity to introduce two of alPHa's active resolutions that are especially relevant to the work of your Interministerial Committee on Healthy Living.

alPHa's members were very pleased to hear about the establishment of this Committee, responsible for coordination and communication of health promotion initiatives across government. While we understand that its present focus is on the role of individual choices, behaviours and attitudes in improving health, we believe that the government must recognize the impacts of its collective choices, behaviours and attitudes in doing the same.

Healthy public policy is the result of the government taking responsibility for the far-reaching impacts of all of its policy decisions. The Smoke-Free Ontario campaign, the removal of junk foods from elementary schools and the Active 2010 initiative are all excellent examples of important accomplishments in this regard.

That this Committee has been struck also appears to be recognition that making Ontarians the healthiest Canadians is not the exclusive responsibility of ministries with "health" in their names. The opportunities provided by health-focused discussions among Ministers of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Children and Youth Services; Community and Social Services; Education; Environment; Health and Long-Term Care; Labour and Municipal Affairs and Housing are significant.

We therefore urge your Committee to carefully examine the attached resolutions and consider long-term strategies and future opportunities to engage the entire government in a broader approach to improving health:

No. A03-1 Establishment of Health Goals and Objectives for Ontario
No. A04-9 Public Health Impact Statement Requirements

The goals and objectives as currently set out within the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines address important public health issues and are valuable measures of progress relating to the health of Ontario citizens. Set by the Ministry of Health, the standards contained therein apply only to the business of Boards of Health. It has become increasingly clear that the achievement of these goals and objectives (both existing and proposed) can only be reached by broader coordination and application across administrative

jurisdictions. We are thus urging the government to consider the implementation of a process that will set comprehensive health goals and objectives for the entire province, with complementary standards for all ministries and government-funded agencies. These standards should include a requirement that public health impact statements be included in all Cabinet submissions.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Stewart,
Executive Director

Copy: Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Hon. Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Children and Youth Services
Hon. Sandra Pupatello, Minister of Community and Social Services
Hon. Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education
Hon. Laurel Broten, Minister of the Environment
Hon. Steve Peters, Minister of Labour
Hon. John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Encl.

ALPHA RESOLUTION NO. A03-1

TITLE: Establishment of Health Goals and Objectives for Ontario

SPONSOR: Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit Board of Health

WHEREAS the goals and objectives as currently set out within the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines address important public health issues and are valuable measures of progress relating to the health of Ontario citizens; and

WHEREAS the additional goals and objectives as set out in Drafts for Revision of four of the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines (i.e., Injury and Substance Abuse Prevention Program, Reproductive Health Program, Chronic Disease Prevention Program, and Child and Youth Health Program) are equally important public health measures and measures of progress; and

WHEREAS the current method of adoption of goals and objectives solely by the Minister of Health and delineating requirements and standards applicable only to Boards of Health is inherently inefficient and perpetuates a lack of co-ordination;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Local Public Health Agencies petition the government of Ontario to review the current process for development and adoption of Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines within the Health Protection and Promotion Act and replace it with a process to establish health goals and objectives for the province of Ontario and subsequently set requirements and standards for all government ministries and government-funded agencies that are comprehensive, complementary and effective in promoting the health of Ontario residents in light of the provincial goals and objectives.

2004 alPHa RESOLUTION NO. A04-9

TITLE: Public Health Impact Statement Requirements

SPONSOR: Board of Directors of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario is responsible under the Constitution Act for legislative matters pertaining to the health of its citizens; and

WHEREAS programs as administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care have continuously risen to presently account for 45% of the Government of Ontario's entire annual program budget; and

WHEREAS the current Government of Ontario has set a goal of making Ontario's citizens the healthiest in Canada; and

WHEREAS the current Government of Ontario has acknowledged the importance of prevention services (i.e. health protection and promotion, disease prevention and surveillance) and has committed to strengthening the public health system that provides them in order to achieve that goal; and

WHEREAS an effective public health system is essential to preserve and enhance the health status of the population and its individuals, to reduce health disparities and to reduce the costs of curative health services (Naylor, 2003:19); and

WHEREAS a central component of the public health system's approach to prevention is the recognition of the health impacts of a wide range and interaction of social, political, economic, environmental, natural and other factors; and

WHEREAS the above factors may be influenced by or originate from the policies of any Ministry or Agency of the Government of Ontario; and

WHEREAS the Association of Local Public Health Agencies has previously called upon the Government of Ontario to establish province-wide health goals with concomitant requirements and standards for all ministries as per *alPHa Resolution A03-1*;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Ontario immediately require that public health impact analysis statements be a component of Cabinet Submissions prepared by any Ministry of Government.