

Hon. George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Main Legislative Building
Room 447
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

2/22/2006

Honourable Minister,

Re. Ontario Farmers' Markets Working Group Recommendations

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 writing today to comment on the above named report and to re-introduce alPHa's resolution on Haines Meat Inspection Review (A05-7, attached).

Since Justice Roland Haines published recommendations for improvements to Ontario's regulatory framework for meat safety in July 2004, we are still awaiting the province's Action Plan that will provide the details on their implementation, as was pledged shortly following the release of the report. Our existing concerns about this delay have been heightened following the release of the Ontario Farmers' Markets Working Group's *Recommendations to Ensure Food Safety at Farmers' Markets*.

Many of the recommendations in this report appear to diverge from the intent of Justice Haines' overall vision for policies that enhance the prevention of food-borne illnesses in Ontario. While we certainly recognize the valuable contributions of farmers' markets in providing community access to fresh foods, they must still be subject to the regulatory mechanisms that protect consumers from food-borne illness. alPHa believes that prevention of food-borne illness is not well served by increasing exemptions from the broad-spectrum requirements set out in our food safety legislation. Neither is it well-served by the development of guidelines that are inconsistently followed and ultimately unenforceable.

We have encouraged our members to provide more specific feedback on the Working Group report, as invited by your Ministry's *Farmers' Markets Feedback Form*. Meanwhile, alPHa will limit its present input to the attached resolution, which calls for the implementation of a food safety action plan to advance Justice Haines' recommendations.

Yours truly,



Linda Stewart,
Executive Director

Copy: Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Dr. Robert Kyle, Medical Officer of Health, Durham Region (Resolution Sponsor)

Encl.

2005 alPha Resolution A05-7

TITLE **Haines Meat Inspection Review**

SPONSOR: Durham Region Health Department

WHEREAS Mr. Justice Roiand Haines reviewed the regulation and inspection of meat in Ontario; and

WHEREAS Justice Haines submitted his report Farm to Fork: A Strategy for Meat Safety in Ontario to the Attorney General on July 21, 2004; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Agriculture of Food announced the provincial government "will enhance food safety in Ontario by implementing the recommendations in the Haines report"; and

WHEREAS 24 of Justice Haines' recommendations pertain to boards of health and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and

WHEREAS over 300,000 cases of foodborne illness occur in Ontario annually, with 60,000 of those related to the consumption of meat and poultry products; and

WHEREAS foodborne illness can result in serious, permanent physical injury and even death, particularly in vulnerable groups such as young children and the elderly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT alPha urges the Government of Ontario and the Chief Medical Officer of Health to act immediately to develop and implement a food safety action plan to advance Justice Haines' recommendations that pertain to boards of health and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and

AND FURTHER THAT the Premier of Ontario, Ministers of Agriculture and Food and Health and Long-Term Care and Chief Medical Officer of Health are so advised.