

Hon. Michael Bryant
Minister, Aboriginal Affairs
Whitney Block, Suite 1407
99 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A 1W3

12/12/2007

Honourable Minister,

Re. Aboriginal Public Health in Ontario

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 welcome you as the Minister of Ontario's newest Ministry, and to make you aware of alPHa's 2002 resolution (attached) calling for a strategy to improve public health services for First Nations people living in Ontario.

The issue of public health in First Nations Communities has long been one where a lack of clearly defined responsibilities, protocols and resources has contributed to significant gaps in health protection and promotion and disease prevention. While the Mandatory Programs as administered by local Health Units address these throughout the province, their application to politically-distinct First Nations territories is not clear, and the public health needs of First Nations people are not being met.

The province's Mandatory Programs are designed to address health issues in three broad categories – chronic diseases and injuries, infectious diseases and family health. A list of these issues might read like a roll call of some of the most significant health problems facing First Nations communities – diabetes, substance abuse, tuberculosis, cancer and heart disease to name but a few.

Fortunately, some encouraging dialogue is beginning to take place. A meeting organized by the Chiefs of Ontario was held in October of this year to launch the *First Nations Public Health Project*, whose goal is, in part, to establish a public health framework for First Nations in Ontario. We look forward to discussing the role of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs under its mandate of participating in governance negotiations with First Nations that deal with subject matters within provincial jurisdiction.

Yours truly,

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Linda Stewart,
Executive Director

Copy: Marg Rappolt, Deputy Minister, Aboriginal Affairs
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Acting)
Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

Encl.

2002 alPHa RESOLUTION A02 - 10

TITLE: Aboriginal Public Health in Ontario

SPONSOR: Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health of alPHa

WHEREAS Recent correspondence from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care clearly indicates that Ontario Board's of Health are fully responsible to deliver all aspects of the Health Protection and Promotion Act and its regulations, including the Mandatory Programs and Services Guidelines; and

WHEREAS a draft review of the Ontario Public Health Infrastructure Available to Aboriginal Peoples by the Public Health Branch indicates many areas of confusion and uncertainty in regards to jurisdictional authority and responsibility in most program, service and legal roles of Ontario's municipal public health system on First Nation Reserves; and

WHEREAS there has been no formal consultation between all parties involved, including First Nations, Treaty Organizations, Federal Government, Provincial Government, Municipal Government and Boards of Health;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) strongly recommends and urgently requests that a comprehensive review and consultation process, to include First Nations representatives, senior federal and provincial health ministry representatives, municipal government representatives, alPHa and Boards of Health representatives, be initiated by the provincial and federal government for the purpose of:

- 1) Clearly determining an Aboriginal Public Health system in and for Ontario First Nation citizens;
- 2) Developing, resourcing and staffing an Aboriginal Public Health Resource centre;
- 3) Establishing methods of funding, reporting and evaluating such systems so as to guarantee the equitable and quality delivery of all aspects of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and its Regulations to all First Nation citizens of Ontario while maintaining fiduciary responsibility of the Federal government in accordance with the Canadian Constitution (British North American Act) and Treaty rights of First Nation Citizens.