

April 29, 2009

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

Honourable Premier,

Re: Supporting the Passage of Bill 156, Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating

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 to express our endorsement of the measures articulated in Bill 156, The Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, 2009 and to enlist your support in ensuring that the public health interests reflected in the Bill are enacted expeditiously into legislation.

Bill 156 presents a unique opportunity for your government to enhance its significant track record of leadership on public health issues and health promotion strategies by empowering people to make choices that will improve their health and well-being. We believe that this transcends political boundaries and is one of the keys to building a more productive and prosperous Ontario.

Presenting caloric data at the moment of decision-making gives consumers the information they need when they need it most and increases the likelihood that they will make healthier choices. It also creates a climate for healthy business competition among service providers engaging them in providing healthier options for consumers. According to Statistics Canada, eating away from home is becoming increasingly prevalent. Since 2001 more than 30 cents of every dollar spent on food has been going to restaurant meals. The trend has been consistent for more than twenty years. Engaging the food industry in this move towards openness and social responsibility is a positive step towards reaping the economic benefits of increased consumer confidence in this industry.

In addition to this, the measures proposed in Bill 156 leverage existing and emerging cultural norms and make effective use of Ontario's considerable investment in health promotion. Reliable research in both the United States and Canada shows that significant segments of the population are motivated to act on nutrition issues. Accurate calculation of caloric information is a specialized skill that cannot be relegated to the individual consumer. Policy makers have a legitimate role to play in supporting health promotion by providing access to this information in an opportune manner.

By implementing the key measures in Bill 156 the government would also be filling leadership gap on an issue that benefits all Canadians. Specifically, it positions Ontario to help inspire the federal government to implement the recommendations of the 2004 Trans Fat Task Force report, *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives*.

The membership of alpha—medical officers of health and other public health leaders across the province—would be happy to contribute to the elucidation of any of the public health issues arising as Bill 156 progresses through the legislative process. We look forward to continuing our mutual collaboration towards a healthier Ontario.

Sincerely



Dr. Charles Gardner
President

Copy: Hon. Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Acting)
Dr. Françoise Bouchard, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health (Health Promotion)
Dr. Shafiq Qaadri, MPP, Etobicoke North
Ms. Laurel Broten, MPP, Etobicoke Lakeshore
Ms. Cheri DiNovo, MPP, Parkdale/High Park
Ms. Elizabeth Witmer, MPP, Kitchener-Waterloo
Mr. Vic Dhillon MPP, Brampton West
Mr. Kim Craitor, MPP, Niagara Falls
Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP, Markham
Mr. Khalil Ramal, MPP, London-Fanshawe
Mr. Peter Shurman, MPP, Thornhill
Ms. France Gelinas, MPP, Nickel Belt
Mr. Bob Runciman, MPP, Leeds-Grenville