



The Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario (Incorporated 1982)

May 25, 2006

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care  
Chief Medical Officer of Health and  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Public Health Division  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hepburn Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1R3

Dear Dr. Basrur

RE: Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Community Events and the Announced Exemptions for Farmers' Markets

---

On behalf of ASPHEO, this letter is a response indicating our concern with the recent announcement from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and intention to exempt Farmers Markets from Ontario Regulation 562, Food Premises (FPR). Exempting Farmers' Markets from the FPR will likely result in increased risks to unsafe food for many communities, residents and visitors who purchase food products from Farmers' Markets that may not be prepared, processed or offered for sale in accordance with accepted and legislated standards.

As you are aware, members of ASPHEO participated on working groups leading to the development of reports entitled *Recommendations to Ensure Food Safety at Ontario's Farmers' Markets* and the *Draft Ontario Farmers' Markets Food Safety Guidelines*. The recent announcement by the Minister raises many concerns about food safety and the protection of residents in many communities across Ontario from food-borne illnesses and other adverse health impacts from improperly processed and/or labeled foods.

Many regulatory changes are needed to the current FPR to ensure food safety for all Ontarians. Mandatory food handling certification for example has been discussed for many years yet still remains outstanding. In addition, the Government of Ontario has made a commitment to implement the recommendations in Justice Haines' Report. Exempting Farmers' Markets from the FPR is contrary to many of these recommendations.

On behalf of ASPHEO, I urge you to reconsider this proposed exemption of Farmers' Markets from the FPR and continue to engage all stakeholders in a review of the FPR and the establishment of standards and guidelines that are both health-risk based, clear and enforceable by local PHU. In addition, there seems to be many flaws in the process and communications from the MOHLTC with respect to the status of these two reports which I would be happy to identify in a future meeting. Feedback on the first report seems to have either been lost or not considered since there were no changes or revisions. A summary report of the comments and/or recommendations that the MOHLTC received from local PHU would be useful in moving this item forward.

The Spring ASPHEO meeting is taking place on May 31<sup>st</sup> in Toronto followed by a Director's meeting with MOHLTC staff on Safe Water on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Food safety issues

related to Farmers' Markets is on our agenda for further discussion. In addition I urge you to refer to the many aPHa resolutions and letters respecting food safety that have been sent to the Minister and the MOHLTC. These can be found on the aPHa website at [http://www.alphaweb.org/food\\_safety.asp](http://www.alphaweb.org/food_safety.asp).

Ensuring that regulations, standards and guidelines are protective of public health must be paramount in our continued efforts to improve food safety across Ontario. In closing, I am requesting to meet with you at the earliest mutually convenient time to discuss this important matter further.

Yours truly,



Ken Gorman, President  
ASPHIO

C/o Durham Region Health Department  
101 Consumers Drive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Whitby, ON  
L1N 1C4  
[ken.gorman@region.durham.on.ca](mailto:ken.gorman@region.durham.on.ca)

Tel: (905) 723-3818 ext. 2281  
Fax: (905) 666-1887

cc: Linda Stewart, Executive Director, aPHa  
Fred Ruf, Food Safety, Safe Water and Environmental Health and Toxicology Unit