

March 10, 2010

Honourable Laurel Broten
Minister of Children and Youth Services
14th Floor, 56 Wellesley St. W.
Toronto, ON M5S 2S3

Dear Minister Broten:

On behalf of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Board of Health I am writing to express our concern regarding the serious impact that insufficient funding of the SMDHU's Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) Program is having on the provision of service delivery. This is a 100 per cent funded Ministry of Children and Youth Services Program that is also mandated within the Ontario Public Health Standards. We urge you to provide adequate funding of the HBHC Program to promote both the universal and targeted aspects of this program.

The HBHC Program is delivered through health units across Ontario in order to promote the optimal development of all children (prenatal to age 6 years). It is a prevention and early-intervention program based on the understanding that early childhood experiences have long-term impacts on the physical and mental health of individuals. The SMDHU's HBHC Program provides service delivery throughout a geographical area of 8,731 square kilometers.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services 2009 budget allocation to the SMDHU was \$2,419,133, which reflected a zero percent increase to base budget from 2008 funding levels. These funding shortfalls continue to undermine the capacity of the HBHC program to meet the goals of the program and deliver services adequately. The service planning schedule achievements continue to be impacted and program standard performance targets will continue to not be met. Unfortunately, communications with Ministry of Children and Youth Services consultants has not brought about any relief and other health units in the province are also challenged by service demands and insufficient budget allocations.

It is critical that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services recognizes the costs associated with delivering the HBHC Program on an annual basis. Both salary and operating costs have continued to escalate over time without respective increases to base budget. Non-allowable expenditures such as administration costs including payroll, purchasing, human resource personnel, general reception and office space also continue to rise. Negligible increases to base budget allocations over the past several years by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has resulted in significant impacts on SMDHU's HBHC Program, including the following: reduced services to children and families overall, waitlists for families in high-risk situations (such as those with mental health concerns, intimate partner violence, isolation, financial/food shortages, parenting concerns/stressors, physical health challenges and young single parents), the elimination of weekend coverage for postpartum telephone calls, the gapping or elimination of public health nurse and family home visitor positions, minimal spending on resources, supplies and staff development, and increased staff workload

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HBHC is an innovative and effective health promotion, early intervention program for prenatal and postpartum woman, infants, children and their families in Ontario. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is proud to provide such an important service to enhance the growth and development of all children universally and at high risk for developmental challenges. With this in mind, our Board of Health urges the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to critically review and revise the funding formula to adequately reflect the actual costs associated with delivering the HBHC Program. It is hoped that you will provide sufficient funds that will facilitate achievement of the goals and objectives of the HBHC Program.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dennis Roughley
Chair, Board of Health

DR:CS:mk

Copies to:

Hon. Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Ms. Aileen Carroll, MPP, Barrie
Mr. Norm Miller, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka
Mr. Garfield Dunlop, MPP, Simcoe North
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