

**Ministry of
Health Promotion**

Office of the Minister

777 Bay Street, 18th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 1S5
Tel.: 416 326-8500
Fax: 416 326-8520
TTY: 416 212-5723
TTY Toll Free: 1 866 263-1410
www.mhp.gov.on.ca

**Ministère de la
Promotion de la santé**

Bureau de la ministre

777, rue Bay, 18^e étage
Toronto ON M7A 1S5
Tél. : 416 326-8500
Télec. : 416 326-8520
ATS : 416 212-5723
ATS sans frais : 1 866 263-1410
www.mhp.gov.on.ca



MHP3034MC-2008-598

APR 28 2008

Dr. Richard Schabas
Medical Officer of Health
Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit
179 North Park Street
Belleville ON K8P 4P1

RECEIVED
MAY 01 2008
ALPHA

Dear Dr. Schabas:

Thank you for your correspondence regarding your support for the Nutrition Tools for Schools toolkit. I appreciate receiving your views on this important matter.

Our government is committed to promoting the health of children and youth across Ontario through improved nutrition, increased physical activity and healthier living. The well-being of all students is our concern and we are working to make schools healthier places to learn.

Preventing obesity, especially among children, through healthy eating and physical activity is a key priority of my ministry.

In the recent Budget, the government committed \$10 million annually to address the rapid rise in childhood obesity, and my ministry has the lead on this issue. We are in the early stages of developing a comprehensive strategy to reduce the rates of obesity that have tripled in the last 15 years at a cost of approximately \$1.6 billion to the Ontario health care system.

As you may know, we are working with our colleagues in the Ministry of Education on various elements of the *Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act*, to help improve the health of our students. This new legislation, which was passed in the Legislature on April 16, 2008, will require schools to drop unhealthy trans fat from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias, vending machines and tuck shops. It builds on earlier action to ban junk food in elementary schools and create a mandatory minimum of 20 minutes of daily exercise in school.

Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) also includes initiatives to combat childhood obesity in settings where children learn, live and play. We are reaching out to teachers, health practitioners, parents and community recreation centres and forming new levels of awareness and support to help our children stay active and eat healthy.

.../2

Some of HEAL's initiatives include:

- the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program. In cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, this initiative provides fruits and vegetables to children in selected Northern Ontario schools. Approximately 12,000 elementary school children will be provided with two to three servings of fruit and vegetables each week, as well as education on the benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption; and,
- the province-wide service, EatRight Ontario, which gives Ontarians access to information on nutrition and healthy eating. People can ask specific nutrition-related questions and receive feedback from a registered dietitian by telephone or the Internet. The service can be accessed by phone toll-free at 1-877-510-510-2 or online at www.ontario.ca/eatright.

The provincial government has also committed to revising school-based nutrition standards to align with the new Canada Food Guide. As part of this review, staff from my ministry and the Ministry of Education, among others, will consult with education and health stakeholders as well as the food industry about nutritional standards for food and beverages offered on school property. This review will help to inform our policy objectives regarding school food and nutrition.

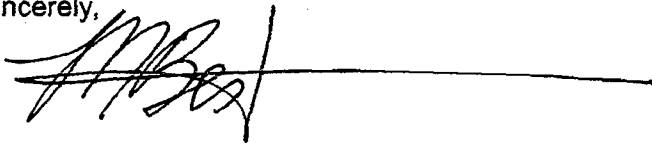
I want to recognize the important work that our public health units have carried out in developing the Nutrition Tools for Schools toolkit. However, the ministry is not currently in a position to endorse any specific resources or tools relating to school nutrition.

I have sent a copy of your letter to the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education, for her information. I trust the Minister will take your views into consideration.

For more information about our government's initiatives in this area, please visit my ministry's website at www.mhp.gov.on.ca, under the Healthy Schools heading. Information can also be found on the Ministry of Education's website at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Best', is written over a solid horizontal line.

Margarett R. Best
Minister

c: Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Acting)
Ms. Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies