



# Northwestern Health Unit

[www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca)

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July 9, 2009

Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Room 281, Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

At the regular meeting of the Board of Health for Northwestern Health Unit held June 26, 2009, Board of Health members considered the Ministry of Health Promotion's decision to discontinue current program funding for the Youth Action Alliance (YAA) program, a component of the Smoke-Free Ontario program, on August 31, 2009, and to redirect resources to the Ministry's emerging youth engagement strategy.

We support the move to a more integrated focus for youth development. However, we are concerned about the termination of the YAA program before the emerging youth engagement strategy is rolled out because it will result in a significant loss of capacity within our Health Unit to deliver youth development programming. With the assumption that the new program would still require support staff to work with youth, it is regrettable that current youth staff must be terminated as they will take their youth worker skills with them: skills that are a result of expensive training and difficult to replace easily or quickly. Extending the existing YAA program until the new youth engagement strategy is implemented would facilitate a smooth transition of one program to the other, including the retention of valuable highly trained youth staff.

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An additional, unfortunate consequence of ending the YAA program before the emerging youth engagement strategy is implemented will be the loss of public 'momentum' in our communities that local youth have created via the YAA program. This momentum is currently focused on advocacy for municipal bylaws and policies for tobacco-free sports and recreation, and advocacy work at the federal level to remove flavours from tobacco products that target youth.

The attached Board of Health Resolution #80-2009 addresses the Board's concerns and requests that the Ministry of Health Promotion delay the termination of the Youth Action Alliance Program until the youth engagement strategy is ready to roll out. We respectfully urge you to consider our request in order for valuable trained youth development staff to be retained and a measure of continuity ensured for our youth programs.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission.

Yours in health,



John Albanese  
Chair  
Board of Health

JA/ds  
Encl.

c: Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)  
All Ontario Boards of Health  
Physicians for Smoke-Free Canada  
Obligated Municipalities, Northwestern Health Unit Catchment  
Dr. James Arthurs, Medical Officer of Health (A), Northwestern Health Unit  
Mark Perrault, Chief Administrative Officer  
Donna Cutler, Director of Health Promotion  
Jennifer McKibbon, Manager, Tobacco Strategy

Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Room 281, Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
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Honourable Margaret Best  
Minister of Health Promotion  
18th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Honourable Dalton McGuinty

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Ms. Cynthia Morton  
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health Promotion  
18th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Ms. Jean Lam  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Promotion Programs  
Ministry of Health Promotion  
18th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
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Ms. Mary Beth Valentine  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Strategic Policy, Planning & Corporate Services  
Ministry of Health Promotion  
18th Floor, 777 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Mr. Denis Gertler  
Director, Smoke-Free Ontario Branch  
Ministry of Health Promotion  
21st Floor, 393 University Avenue  
Toronto, ON M7A 2S1

**BOARD OF HEALTH**

No. 80 - 2009

RESOLUTION

Moved by ..... *M. Egidio* .....

Seconded by ..... *Debbie Lauder* .....

WHEREAS The Youth Action Alliance (YAA) program, which is known as the <sup>NW</sup>YAA! in the Northwestern Health Unit and has been in existence for four years as of June 2009, has established a reputation within the Health Unit and all the communities that it serves as a valuable and contributing program;

AND WHEREAS the <sup>NW</sup>YAA! has trained over 50 young people as advocates for youth issues and healthy communities, and who through peer-to-peer influence have positively impacted many more youth in our region;

AND WHEREAS the <sup>NW</sup>YAA! through community events and activities have brought increased awareness and healthy change to the communities where they have worked;

AND WHEREAS training and capacity building is an integral and continuing aspect of the YAA program, and existing staff are highly trained in youth development and healthy living advocacy;

AND WHEREAS the Ministry has indicated their intention to replace the YAA program with a new Youth Engagement Strategy by terminating the YAA program effective August 31, 2009;

AND WHEREAS transitioning to the new Youth Engagement Strategy with a break in service will result in a significant and not easily recovered loss of capacity, as trained youth development staff in Health Units are laid off at the end of the YAA program;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ministry of Health Promotion delay the termination of the YAA program until such time as the new Youth Engagement Strategy is ready to roll out, and effective and highly trained youth development staff can be transitioned into new positions, so as to retain the important and needed capacity within Health Units to do youth development work in their communities;

AND FURTHER that this request be communicated directly to the Premier, the Minister of Health Promotion, the Deputy Minister of Health Promotion, Assistant Deputy Ministers for Health Promotion Programs and Strategic Policy, and the Director for Smoke-Free Ontario Branch for immediate action to avoid unnecessary loss of staff at the local level;

AND FURTHER that this Resolution be shared with all other Public Health Boards in Ontario, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA), Physicians for Smoke-Free Canada and obligated municipalities for Northwestern Health Unit with a request for quick support.

Date June 26, 2009

Chair ..... *John Albanese* .....  
John Albanese