

January 17, 2007

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

Dear Minister Chambers:

On behalf of the Simcoe Muskoka District Board of Health I am writing to indicate our grave concerns related to the financial challenges the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Healthy Babies Healthy Children program (HBHC) is experiencing. Funding shortfalls continue to threaten the capacity of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program to promote the health and well-being and prevent disease and disability of the families with young children residing in Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka. We are asking that adequate funding takes place to promote both the universal and targeted aspects of the program.

The Healthy Babies Healthy Children program is an innovative province-wide prevention and early intervention program delivered through health units across Ontario in order to promote the optimal development of all children (prenatal to age 6 years). It is a proven prevention and early intervention program based on the understanding that positive early childhood experiences have positive long-term impacts on the physical and mental health of individuals. It is the goal of the Board of Health to ensure all families have equitable and timely service delivery related to the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services 2006 budget allocation of \$2,345,800 for Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit reflects a \$10,000 base increase, or a limited 0.4% increase to base budget from 2005. It is unreasonable to expect the HBHC program to deliver services in 2007 based on a relatively unchanged 2005 budget. This funding shortfall is presently threatening the capacity of the HBHC program to deliver services adequately. 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.

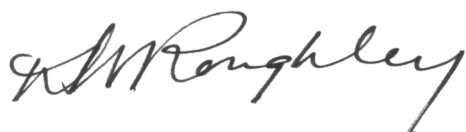
Correspondence sent to Ministry of Children and Youth Services Strategic Initiatives Branch Director November 18, 2006 indicating the 2006 grant of \$2,345,800 was insufficient to operate the program at expected levels for 2007 along with indicating concerns with the ability to balance the budget for 2006. Correspondence received back to the Director of Family Health Service indicated it is the ministry's expectation that the health unit delivers the HBHC program within the funding allocated and that health units who have requested funds to balance 2006 budgets will not be made available.

It is critical the Ministry of Children and Youth Services recognizes the costs associated with delivering the program on an annual basis. Both salary and operating costs have continued to increase without base budget increases taking place. This has resulted in positions not being filled leaving service delivery needs unmet. Workload continues to be a challenge and waitlists have been developed. Minimal spending on resources/supplies and staff development will occur throughout 2007. The 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 Healthy Babies Healthy Children program.

Healthy Babies Healthy Children is an innovative and effective health promotion, early intervention program for the citizens of Ontario, specifically the children and their families. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is proud to provide service to enhance the growth and development of all children universally and at high risk for developmental challenges. It is hoped that you will encourage funding at levels which will see to it that the objectives of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program are sufficient in order to be met.

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

Sincerely,



Dennis Roughley
Chair, Board of Health

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Copies to:

Hon. Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Tony Clement, MP, Parry Sound-Muskoka
Hon. Helena Guergis, MP, Simcoe-Grey
Hon. Peter Van Loan, MP, York-Simcoe
Mr. Bruce Stanton, MP, Simcoe North
Mr. Patrick Brown, MP, Barrie
Mr. Joe Tascona, MPP, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford
Mr. Norm Miller, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka
Mr. Garfield Dunlop, MPP, Simcoe North
Mr. Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey
Dr. George Pasut, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health
All Ontario Health Units
Mrs. Carolyn Shoreman, Director, Family Health Service, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit