



Thunder Bay District Health Unit

MAIN OFFICE

999 Balmoral Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7B 6E7
Tel: (807) 625-5900
Toll Free in 807 area code
1-888-294-6630
Fax: (807) 623-2369

GERALDTON

P.O. Box 1360
510 Hogarth Avenue
Geraldton, Ontario
P0T 1M0
Tel: (807) 854-0454
Speech: (807) 854-0905
Fax: (807) 854-1871

MANITOUWADGE

P.O. Box 385
Manitou Road
Manitouwadge, Ontario
P0T 2C0
Tel: (807) 826-4061
Fax: (807) 826-4993

MARATHON

P.O. Box 384
Library Building
Peninsula Road
Marathon, Ontario
P0T 2E0
Tel: (807) 229-1820
Fax: (807) 229-3356

NIPIGON

P.O. Box 15
Nipigon District Memorial
Hospital
125 Hogan Road
Nipigon, Ontario
P0T 2J0
Tel: (807) 887-3031
or (807) 887-2908
Fax: (807) 887-3489

SCHREIBER

P.O. Box 698
Jack Stokes Medical
Building
501 Scotia Street
Schreiber, Ontario
P0T 2S0
Tel: (807) 824-2413
Fax: (807) 824-2349

January 6, 2006

The Hon. Jim Watson
Minister of Health Promotion
35th Floor, 250 Yonge St
TORONTO, ON M5B 2N5

Dear Mr. Watson:

re: Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives

With the one-year anniversary of the release of the Chief Medical Officer of Health's *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives* report come and gone, and further to our Board of Health Resolution No. 05-66 of June 2005, we reaffirm our support for the immediate implementation of the report.

The good news is that this obesity epidemic is potentially reversible, and with concerted action from all sectors (government, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and communities), we will effect change. Based on our own local key stakeholder consultation, our community leaders are ready to partner and work with public health. We must act now to take advantage of this groundswell.

While we have been delighted by recently announced initiatives aimed at increasing physical activity levels of Ontarians, we would like to underscore the importance of a balanced and comprehensive portfolio -- the need to influence both nutrition and physical activity behaviours, and the social, cultural and environmental factors that are driving the obesity epidemic in our society. With more than a quarter of children and youth, and more than half of adults overweight and obese, this epidemic is truly a population-wide problem and not just a condition affecting certain 'high risk' groups. That said, we do need to recognize the unique contexts within which these programs must be delivered and tailor our strategies to the diverse needs of Ontario's communities.

As outlined in *Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives* and echoed by recommendations from the World Health Organization, a comprehensive multi-sectoral strategy that addresses both physical activity and healthy eating is required to curb overweight and obesity.

Health Units require:

- **Mass media campaigns** to increase awareness and promote existing healthy eating and physical activity messages and programs to the community-at-large;
- **Community-level funding** for public health units to work as part of intersectoral coalitions and to hire staff to implement recommended, promising or evidence-based programs and to evaluate their impact;
- **Support to change policy** at local, provincial and federal levels; ie, advertising to children, social assistance rates, minimum wage, foods offered and sold at schools; and liability insurance and user fees for recreation programs.
- **Province-wide chronic disease risk factor surveillance** to monitor such indicators as dietary intake, physical activity and weight, and, over time, the impact of our policies and programs.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions.

Sincerely,



Connie Bryson, Chair
Thunder Bay District Board of Health

CB/CS-M

copy: Premier Dalton McGuinty
Minister of Northern Development and Mines
Minister of Health and Long Term Care
Minister of Education
Minister of Tourism and Education
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Local members of Provincial Parliament
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Public Health Association
Ontario Boards of Health
Member municipalities