



June 24th, 2009

Dalton McGuinty, Premier
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Dalton McGuinty,

We are writing on behalf of the 32 non-governmental organizations, professional groups and associations that make up the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance to express our support for the sustained provision of comprehensive tobacco control programs that include protection, prevention and cessation activities.

We are proud of your government's achievements through the Smoke Free Ontario Act, yet we are concerned that, as the findings of the recent report by the Ontario Tobacco Control Unit (OTRU; February 2009) indicate, only 4% of Ontario's smokers are directly being reached by Ontario's smoking cessation system. Results from a 2007 pilot study implemented in the Simcoe Muskoka Public Health Unit indicate that 15% of Simcoe Muskoka smokers report they want to quit in the next month, but the current system is reaching only 3% of them per year. The OTRU report also suggests that the Ministry of Health Promotion should consider further developing its working relationships with partners in the current cessation strategy to build a fully integrated system of cessation; hence, continued investment in this area is necessary.

We understand that the Ministry of Health Promotion, through its strategic planning exercise is integrating policy across all strategic aspects of health promotion. There is growing evidence across Canadian and international jurisdictions that an integrated approach to chronic disease prevention can be effective. This integration of common risk factors for major chronic disease through approaches that promote and support healthy living serve to consolidate what can be fragmented or isolated health promotion and disease prevention efforts. However, it is also evident that not all chronic disease prevention interventions are effective when integrated and some single-risk factor interventions will be required to achieve desired health outcomes. We believe that this is the case with many of the interventions within the tobacco strategy. Due to its unique nature and the stage of present implementation, we believe that tobacco must remain a separate initiative, even if some components of the strategy are integrated, so that the benefits of the Smoke Free Ontario Strategy are not lost. It is imperative that dedicated resources are maintained within the Ministry of Health Promotion to support a smoke-free Ontario.

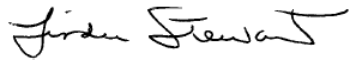
In times of economic challenge, we need to address and invest in chronic disease prevention, not diminish our commitments. We need a meaningful engagement to develop a coherent strategy that will drive down the prevalence of chronic disease. Tobacco control is a key aspect of that strategy and disintegration of the Smoke Free Ontario Strategy does not serve our organizational and public health interests.

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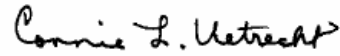
The OCDPA, its Partners and Members, can support integration of chronic disease prevention strategies at the community level and are looking for opportunities for meaningful integration at community, provincial and regional levels. The OCDPA is committed to working with the government to enhance the impact of chronic disease prevention efforts. A strong and viable comprehensive tobacco control strategy is essential to making Ontario a world leader in chronic disease prevention. We look forward to discussing the road forward together.

Thank you for the leadership. We need it now, or else gains will be lost.

Yours sincerely,



Linda Stewart
Co-Chairs, Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance



Connie Uetrecht

cc. Honourable Minister Margaret Best
Honourable Minister David Caplan
Dr. Sacha Bhatia