

June 3, 2019

Hon. Christine Elliott
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, 80 Grosvenor St,
Toronto, Ontario

Re: Response to Announcements about Modernizing Ontario's Public Health Units

Dear Minister Elliott:

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH) is concerned about the provincial budget announcement regarding Modernizing Ontario's Public Health Units and proposed budget cuts to public health. ODPH is aware of the Ontario government's focus on residents and understands the pressures on the healthcare system that have led to "hallway health care". We support the statements outlined in the [Premier's Council report](#), including the need for "additional focus on preventative measures" such as "eating healthy food" and "increasing capacity in the community".

Investing in public health nutrition has the potential to yield a substantial return on investment by preventing the most common chronic conditions, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer and dementia. Supporting Ontarians to achieve healthy diets could save our health care system up to \$13.8 billion/year in direct (CAD \$5.1 billion) and indirect (CAD \$8.7 billion) costs (1).

The recently released Lancet EAT Commission report identified unhealthy diets as the largest factor contributing to the global burden of disease. In Canada, dietary risks are one of the three leading risk factors for disease burden, as measured by death and disability combined (2). Chronic diseases impacted by diet such as ischemic heart disease, stroke, colorectal cancer, diabetes, and breast cancer, are among the leading causes of premature death in Canada (3). With Ontario's aging population, dementia is a growing public health problem. The World Health Organization identified nutrition as an intervention to reduce the risk of cognitive decline and/or dementia (4).

Registered Dietitians working in Public Health are regulated health professionals who have comprehensive training in nutrition and population health. We work to improve Ontarians' food environments, food literacy, and access to healthy food. Public Health Dietitians work on the front-line in our local communities to educate and provide hands-on training about healthy eating and nutrition to volunteers, educators, and community leaders including, child care providers, residential care facility owners, peer nutrition workers, teachers, student nutrition program volunteers, recreation leaders and many others. Registered Dietitians are an integral and necessary part of the interdisciplinary healthcare team required to address the most pressing healthcare needs of the Ontario public.

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH) has been working efficiently, collaboratively and effectively across the province for many years to keep our communities healthy. ODPH offers the full support and expertise of its membership and Executive to work with the Ministry and other public health agencies in modernizing Public Health in Ontario. We look forward to having the opportunity to discuss this further and we are available to consult with Ministry representatives at any time.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Doris, Co-Chair Year 2
ODPH Executive Committee



Ellen Lakusiak, Co-Chair Year 1
ODPH Executive Committee

cc.

Robyn Martin MPP and Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Health

Dr. David C. Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Dr. Rueben Devlin, Special Advisor and Chair of the Premier's Council on Improving Healthcare and Ending Hallway Medicine hallwayhealthcare@ontario.ca

Gordon Fleming, Manager, Public Health Issues, ALPHA

Jennifer Buccino, Dietitians of Canada, Regional Executive Director, Ontario

Pegeen Walsh, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association

References

- 1) Lieffers JRL, Ekwaru JP, Ohinmaa A, Veugelers PJ. (2018) The economic burden of not meeting food recommendations in Canada: The cost of doing nothing. PLoS ONE 13(4): e0196333. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0196333>
- 2) Willet, E. et. al. (2019). Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems. The Lancet. Available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31788-4.pdf?utm_campaign=tleat19&utm_source=HubPage](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(18)31788-4.pdf?utm_campaign=tleat19&utm_source=HubPage)
- 3) Health Canada. (2019). Canada's Dietary Guidelines for Health Professionals and Policymakers. Available at: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/static/assets/pdf/CDG-EN-2018.pdf>
- 4) World Health Organization. RISK REDUCTION OF COGNITIVE DECLINE AND DEMENTIA WHO Guidelines. (2019). Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/312180/9789241550543-eng.pdf?ua=1>