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September 6, 2011

Andrea Horwath  
Leader Candidate  
Ontario NDP  
101 Richmond Street East  
Toronto, ON  
M5C 1N9

Dear Ms. Horwath:

The Ontario Society of Physical Activity Promoters in Public Health's (OSPAPPH) mission is to elevate physical activity as a public health priority in Ontario through engagement, education, advocacy and strategic alliances. We aim to be the unified voice representing public health practitioners with the mandate of promoting physical activity in our respective communities. This society builds on the strengths of an established infrastructure and mandate within the public health system, as well as the partnerships formed at the community, provincial and national levels, with the ultimate purpose of increasing physical activity levels in Ontario.

Our association shares in your concern about the health of Ontarians and supporting people's ability to make healthy choices. We congratulate the stated dedication in your 2011 party's election platform to make health promotion a top priority, and the explicit pledge to support healthy active lifestyles.

Dedicated public health professionals in communities throughout Ontario have been striving to promote health and prevent chronic disease and obesity through increased physical activity. We know that:

- One in three Ontarians is affected by chronic disease. (Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, Making Ontario the Healthiest Province In Canada) There is also a dramatic rise in obesity among Ontario residents. As overweight and obesity rates rise so do the rates of heart disease, diabetes and other medical problems. (Canadian Community Health Survey, 2005)
  - 80% of the population aged above 65 have at least one chronic disease, while approximately 70% suffer two or more. ( Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, Making Ontario the Healthiest Province In Canada)
  - Physical inactivity cost Canadians \$5.3 billion in 2001 (including \$1.6 billion in direct health care costs) or approximately 2.6% of total health care costs (Katzmarzyk & Janssen, 2004)
  - It is generally accepted that the rise in obesity is due in part to the changes in physical activity levels in Ontario and Canada. Activity and fitness levels have significantly
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declined to where only 15% of adults and 7% of children are meeting the recommended guidelines for physical activity (Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2011).

- Although it is tempting to attribute personal life choices to the cause, we are learning it is the environments that people live and work in that make it difficult for individuals to maintain active healthy lifestyles. For example, there has been a large increase in car travel by children over the last few decades. Active transportation for children - primarily walking and cycling to school - has been for the most part replaced by car travel resulting in a significant amount of reduced activity. (Child and youth friendly land use and transport planning, 2005).

To do the work necessary to make a difference at the individual, community and societal levels, our efforts must be supported by strong leadership and a commitment to the promotion of physical activity and building supportive environments for daily active lifestyles. Adequate funding is needed to address this important issue.

In closing, OSPAPPH recommends increased investments into public health chronic disease prevention programming as well as community-level programs and supports that facilitate opportunities for Ontarians to be active in their daily lives. We also recommend adequate investments for evaluation and ongoing research to ensure effectiveness and monitor impact.

Our association applauds your commitment to this important public health issue, and look forward to working with you on increasing physical activity for health of all Ontarians.

*Lisa Kaldewey*  
Lisa Kaldewey  
OSPAPPH Co-chair

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