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September 28, 2012

Health Promotion Division, Strategic Initiatives Branch  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
777 Bay Street, 19th Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Attn: Healthy Kids Panel

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 their 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.

We are excited to have the opportunity to provide input to the Healthy Kids Panel as we know increasing physical activity levels and decreasing sedentary activity of children and youth in Ontario is essential to decreasing childhood obesity and improving the health of **all** children and youth.

We have collaborated with the Ontario Public Health Association and other provincial agencies to provide recommendations from the Chronic Disease Prevention Work Group. We support the recommendations made in this report and want to expand on the physical activity recommendations put forward.

Please find below our priority recommendations to increase physical activity levels in child care settings, schools and the community.

1) The Ministry of Education should support all school boards and schools to commit to full implementation of the Health and Physical Education curriculum to ensure that every child can develop the knowledge, skills and habits that are the foundation to a physically active lifestyle. (AC)

- Health and physical literacy<sup>1</sup> need to be held to the same standard as literacy and numeracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals who are physically literate move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person (Mandigo, Francis, Lodewyk & Lopez, 2009).

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- The Ministry of Education needs to ensure quality Health and Physical Education curriculum is delivered by health and physical education specialists in all Ontario elementary and secondary schools.
- The Ministry of Education must evaluate the feasibility, and potential beneficial outcomes of, as well as investigate the most appropriate way to proceed with, making Health and Physical Education credits a mandatory requirement for grades 9-12. Look to other jurisdictions for how they have implemented this, impacts, and what can be learned prior to implementing.
- Implement stronger accountability measures to ensure the Health & Physical Education curriculum is taught.

2) The Ministry of Education must increase the capacity of childcare providers, early childhood educators, and teachers to adequately plan, assess and implement programs and strategies that support the development of physical literacy:

- The Ontario College of Teachers should equip all teachers with the necessary knowledge to understand how physical literacy is formed, its importance to lifelong physical activity and the skills to deliver quality daily physical activity.
- The Ministry of Education must ensure ongoing staff training related to physical literacy for all teachers, early childhood educators, and childcare providers.
- The Ministry of Education needs to strengthen the Day Nurseries Act to promote and support physical literacy development and increased physical activity in licensed childcare settings.
- Evaluate the compliance of the Daily Physical Activity policy and put measures in place to enforce the requirement.

3) Support a 'whole of school' approach that includes physical activity in school physical education classes, providing suitable physical environments that support structured and unstructured physical activity throughout the day, active transportation to/from school initiatives and decreasing sedentary time.

4) Continue to fund and improve the Community Use of Schools initiative and After School initiative, creating greater access to affordable physical activity opportunities for children and youth, particularly during the after-school hours.

- Encourage collaboration between school board administrators and recreational directors regarding reciprocal shared use and shared maintenance of facilities

5) Invest in improving access to physical activity opportunities for all children and youth, particularly vulnerable populations by:

- Providing provincial funding to municipalities specifically for universal access to community-identified core programs.
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- Providing guidance & direction to municipal governments on developing comprehensive access to recreation policies (using existing references - e.g. Ontario Task Group for Access to Recreation for Low Income Families Policy Framework and Policy Development & Implementation Guide for Communities)
- Addressing the recreation infrastructure deficit to ensure everyone has access to indoor and outdoor facilities and safe spaces to be physically active

6) Sport and recreation sectors work with municipalities and other community partners to improve access for all children and youth to quality affordable physical activity/recreation opportunities.

- Make families aware of low to no cost opportunities already available within their community to be physically active.
- Promote subsidy opportunities.
- Provide a wide range of affordable sport and recreation opportunities that will meet the diverse interests and abilities of children and youth to participate who are traditionally underrepresented.

7) Support active transportation by strengthening the policy act on active transportation and providing funding for walking and cycling infrastructure to municipalities.

- Government should reallocate 1-2% of transportation (or other) budget for active transportation
- Municipalities must update/amend Official Plans/Master Plans to ensure opportunities for physical activity are explicitly included in all facets of the plan. Transportation plans should be required to place priority on active transportation (dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure in new and re-developments) and public transportation.
- A provincial 'bike policy' is supported and advanced that outlines the provincial government's commitment to improving provincial infrastructure for safe cycling.

8) Primary health care professionals should be trained in physical activity prescription, sedentary behaviour reduction and referral as part of their education and professional development.

9) Invest in consistent, coordinated and clear provincial level public education and awareness-raising about physical activity, sedentary behaviour and the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behavior Guidelines (only if in combination with other approaches).

10) Develop a provincial physical activity strategy that aligns with the Active Canada 20/20 national strategy and incorporates supporting direction from the Canadian Sport Policy.

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11) Surveillance measures:

- The system for monitoring physical activity and sedentary behaviour levels in Canada and the impacts of national or provincial/territorial strategies should be enhanced and maintained to ensure quality, timely and relevant data is collected **that is consistent and comparable** for systemic measurement of progress towards the vision and goals of national (Active Canada 20/20) and provincial level strategies.
- Ongoing research should be conducted on barriers, determinants, prevalence and correlates of physical activity and sedentary behaviour.

OSPAPPH supports the Government of Ontario's desire to improve the health and wellness of all children and youth. This will require collaboration from government at all levels and across all sectors. We encourage a commitment to making changes to policy and creating supportive environments to help make the healthy choice the easy choice, rather than simply focusing on individual level behaviour changes.

OSPAPPH acknowledges that this endeavour is a long term process. We welcome the opportunity to be consulted on matters related to physical activity and physical literacy development. We look forward to reading the Healthy Kids Panel's final recommendations.

Warmest regards,

*Chalonde*

Chantal L. Lalonde  
OSPAPPH Co-chair

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Jackie Leroux  
OSPAPPH Co-chair

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