August 18, 2014

The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Dr. Hoskins:

Re: Niagara Region supports Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) resolution A13-3 Baby-Friendly designation for all Ontario Hospitals

In 2011, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) instituted Baby-Friendly designation as a requirement for all health units in Ontario. However, in order to support optimal feeding for all infants, Niagara Region’s Board of Health believes Ontario needs a more comprehensive and coordinated effort that is inclusive of all maternal/child health service providers. To achieve this, we believe provincial government leadership, led by your ministry, for the implementation of Baby-Friendly designation in all health care facilities that provide services to families with young children, is essential to supporting the consistent, evidence-based and high quality care needed to achieve Health Canada recommendations for infant feeding.

Substantial reliable research evidence supports important health advantages, for both mothers and their infants, associated with breastfeeding. Health Canada (2014) has identified breastfeeding as the “normal and unequalled method” of infant feeding and “promotes breastfeeding - exclusively for the first six months, and sustained for up to two years or longer with appropriate complementary feeding.” The Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) provides a framework for the implementation of best practices in maternal/child care to increase breastfeeding rates and ensure that all parents are able to make informed decisions about feeding their babies and feel supported in their chosen feeding method.
Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH) is committed to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding and is proud to be a Baby-Friendly designated organization. Niagara Region’s Board of Health recently passed a resolution endorsing aPHa Resolution A13-3 (attached) and respectfully requests MOHLTC, building upon the positive momentum of the directive for Baby Friendly designation by public health units, strongly encourage all Ontario hospitals to implement the World Health Organization’s 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and work collaboratively with their local health units toward attaining Baby-Friendly designation in all of our primary care facilities.

Yours truly,

Gary Burroughs
Regional Chair

C: Olha Dobush, ADM, Health Promotion, MOHLTC
   Laura Pisko, Director, Health Promotion Implementation, MOHLTC
   Dr. Valerie Jaeger, Medical Officer of Health, Niagara Region
   Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aPHa)

GBs132-14
TITLE: Baby-Friendly Designation for all Ontario Hospitals

SPONSOR: Board of Health for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit

WHEREAS breastfeeding supports optimal health and developmental outcomes in infants and young children, as supported by research; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) recommends that breastfeeding should be protected, promoted, and supported as breast milk is the ideal form of nutrition for all infants and young children; and

WHEREAS that World Health Organization’s Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI) is an evidence-based program to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding, as outlined in the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada’s BFI 10 Steps and Practice Outcome Indicators (2012); and

WHEREAS the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has identified BFI designation as a requirement for Family Health programs for all Health Units in its Accountability Agreements; and

WHEREAS the provincial Healthy Kids Panel in its report titled No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy (2013) on reducing the incidence of childhood overweight and obesity, recommends that all hospitals with labour and delivery units and all paediatric hospitals to be designated Baby-Friendly; and

WHEREAS the CPS recommends that “provincial/territorial ministries of health should mandate the development of a strategy for the implementation of the BFI in all health care facilities providing maternal/child health services, including hospitals, public health units, community health centres and physicians’ offices”; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has endorsed the WHO’s International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, (WHO Code) which protects breastfeeding by restricting the marketing of infant formula, in particular through the health care system; and

WHEREAS despite Canada’s adoption of the WHO Code the formula industry continues to violate the WHO Code, and market formula through the health care system, specifically by providing free formula to hospitals;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies urges the Minister of Health and Long Term Care to strongly encourage all Ontario hospitals to implement the BFI 10 Steps, and work to achieve Baby-Friendly designation;