

alPHa's members are
the public health units
in Ontario.

alPHa Sections:

Boards of Health
Section

Council of Ontario
Medical Officers of
Health (COMOH)

Affiliate

Organizations:

ANDSOOHA - Public
Health Nursing
Management

Association of Ontario
Public Health Business
Administrators

Association of
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Epidemiologists
in Ontario

Association of
Supervisors of Public
Health Inspectors of
Ontario

Health Promotion
Ontario

Ontario Association of
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Society of
Nutrition Professionals
in Public Health

16 July 2013

Hon. Liz Sandals,
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 22nd Flr
900 Bay St
Toronto ON M7A1L2

Dear Minister Sandals,

Re: alPHa Resolution A13-6 - Mandatory Physical Education for Ontario Secondary School Students

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), I am writing today to introduce alPHa Resolution A13-6 - Mandatory Physical Education for Ontario Secondary School Students, which calls for a requirement for students to earn a physical education credit in every grade from 9 to 12 to achieve high school graduation.

Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care has singled out physical inactivity as a contributing factor to chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer, which are such a significant yet avoidable burden on Ontario's health care system. The Plan goes on to underscore the importance of putting government efforts into promoting healthy habits and behaviours to keep Ontario healthy.

In their 2012 report, *Taking Action to Prevent Chronic Disease – Recommendations for a Healthier Ontario*, Public Health Ontario and Cancer Care Ontario also identified physical inactivity as one of four key risk factors for the most common chronic diseases, and specifically recommended that mandatory physical education throughout secondary school be a prerequisite for graduation.

Finally, the Healthy Kids Panel (HKP) report, *No Time to Wait- The Healthy Kids Strategy* observes that Ontario children spend at least six hours a day for fourteen years in school environments, which makes these settings ideal for promoting healthy habits that will remain with them through adulthood. The HKP thus urges "the creation of school communities where nutrition, physical education and health are more than part of the curriculum: they are an integral part of every school day". It also goes on to recommend compulsory physical education in each year of high school.

We are clearly not alone in the belief that introducing mandatory physical education in every year of secondary school will make an important contribution to reducing the burden of chronic disease in Ontario, which is the presumed outcome of your Government's priority of reducing childhood obesity by 20% over 5 years. We look forward to working with you and our other partners in health and education to ensure that physical activity becomes a daily habit for healthy living and wellness for all Ontarians.

Yours truly,

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Mary Johnson
President

Copy: Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health; Kate Manson-Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health Promotion Division); Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health & Long-Term Care; Hon. Teresa Piruzza, Minister of Children and Youth Services

TITLE: Mandatory Physical Education for Ontario Secondary School Students

SPONSOR: Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit

WHEREAS physical inactivity may diminish academic performance, and is strongly associated with chronic disease - the leading cause of death in Ontario; and

WHEREAS Ontarians have high levels of physical inactivity as 49.2 % aged 12 and older report being inactive during leisure time; and

WHEREAS during adolescence, when youth establish lifelong habits, physical activity actually declines; and

WHEREAS only one physical education credit is required to graduate from Ontario secondary schools, and enrollment in additional voluntary physical education classes is declining; and

WHEREAS participation in school-based physical education is effective in increasing physical activity levels during the school years and into adulthood;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that aIPHa urge the Government of Ontario to endorse the “Taking Action to Prevent Chronic Disease” report from Cancer Care Ontario and Public Health Ontario, and take immediate action towards implementation of the recommendation to require students to earn a physical education credit in every grade from 9 to 12 to achieve high school graduation;

AND FURTHER that a collaborative approach be taken to development of the curriculum that includes the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Boards of Education, Secondary School staff, parents and students to ensure a positive experience for Ontario’s youth that will encourage healthy active living into adulthood.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Resolution CARRIED AS AMENDED