June 18, 2018

Honourable Indira Naidoo-Harris
Provincial Minister of Education/
Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care
900 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 1L7

Dear Minister Naidoo-Harris:

Re: Mandatory Food Literacy Curricula in Ontario Schools

On May 25, 2018 at a regular meeting of the Board for the Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Board considered the attached correspondence from Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox and Addington Board of Health regarding food literacy curricula in Ontario schools. The following motion was passed:

GBHU BOH Motion 2018-51

Moved by: Mitch Twolan Seconded by: Stewart Halliday

“THAT, the Board of Health for the Grey Bruce Health Unit support the motion from Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington requesting an examination of current school curricula with regards to food literacy, and introduction of food literacy and food skills as a mandatory component of curricula in Ontario Schools.”

Carried

Sincerely,

Hazel Lynn, MD, FCFP, MHSc
Acting Medical Officer of Health
Grey Bruce Health Unit

Cc: Ontario Boards of Health

Encl.
April 26, 2018

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris
Provincial Minister of Education/
Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L7

Dear Minister Naidoo-Harris:

Re: Mandatory Food Literacy Curricula in Ontario Schools

The Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington (KFL&A) Board of Health passed the following motion at its April 25, 2018 meeting:

THAT the KFL&A Board of Health endorse provincial policy action found in the 2017 Food EPI Canada Report calling for an examination of current school curricula with regards to food literacy, and introduction of food literacy and food skills as a mandatory component of school curricula, and send correspondence to:

1) The Honourable Indira Naidoo-Harris, Provincial Minister of Education
2) The Honourable Dr. Helena Jaczek, Provincial Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

And FURTHER that a copy of this endorsement be forwarded to:

1) Ms. Sophie Kiwala, MPP Kingston and the Islands
2) Mr. Randy Hillier, MPP Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox & Addington
3) Ontario Dietitians in Public Health Dietitians
4) The Association of Local Public Health Agencies

Food literacy has been in decline over the past few decades and the resultant food deskilling has affected all segments of society, including children and youth. It has led to an increase of pre-prepared, packaged and convenience foods, eating away from home, and a higher consumption of processed foods that are higher in fat, salt and sugar. These foods are linked to a greater risk of diet-related chronic conditions and diseases such as obesity, heart disease and type II diabetes.
At a time when essential food literacy skills are lacking, there is a lack of opportunity to acquire these skills in the school setting. In Ontario, home economics, including food literacy education and training, was removed several decades ago from the Grade 7 and 8 curricula. Over the same time period, there has been a proliferation in processed and ready to consume foods, and marketing of unhealthy food and beverages. While food literacy curriculum is available to students, it is estimated that only one-third of Ontario students who entered Grade 9 from the 2005/06 to 2009/10 school years earned one or more credits in a course that included a food literacy component during their secondary school education.

Recently, a panel of more that 70 non-governmental experts from 44 universities, non-governmental, and professional organizations from across Canada gathered to comprehensively assess Canadian food environment policies compared to international benchmarks of current best practice. In their report *Creating healthier food environments in Canada, Current policies and priority actions*, this group recommended, among other provincial/territorial recommendations, the following policy action:

Examine current school curricula with regards to food literacy, and introduce food literacy and food skills training as a mandatory component of school curricula. p. 7

Schools provide an opportunity to support students in making healthy choices and in gaining knowledge and food skills that will lead to developing food literacy, which will guide lifelong healthy eating habits. The KFL&A Board of Health urges the Provincial Government to examine the current school curricula with respect to food literacy, and to introduce mandatory food literacy and food skills training curricula.

Yours truly,

D. J. Doyle

Dennis Doyle, Chair
KFL&A Board of Health

Copy to: The Honourable Dr. Helena Jaczek, Provincial Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Ms. Sophie Kiwala, MPP Kingston and the Islands
Mr. Randy Hillier, MPP Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox & Addington
Ontario Dietitians in Public Health Dietitians
The Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Board of Health members