February 12, 2021

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
premier@ontario.ca

Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org

Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Dear Premier Ford, Ministers Lecce and Elliott:

Re: Bill 216: Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020

On behalf of the Board of Health for Peterborough Public Health (PPH), I would like to express our support for Bill 216: Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020.

As shared in a staff report at the December 9, 2020 meeting of the PPH Board of Health, food literacy is an important life skill encompassing much more than food and cooking skills and is essential for a solid foundation of healthy eating behaviours. We are pleased that the proposed Bill will require school boards to offer experiential food literacy education to all Ontario students in grades 1 through 12. Requiring food literacy in the Ontario curriculum will ensure that all children and youth develop vital skills to inform food choices throughout their lives. We know that using hands-on, experiential learning about food contributes significantly to increasing vegetable and fruit consumption for students aged 4-18 years. As well, youth (18-23 years) who have self-perceived cooking skills are more likely to have positive nutrition-related outcomes ten years later (i.e., more frequent preparation of meals including vegetables, and less frequent consumption of fast food).

The benefits of food literacy and cooking programs extends beyond healthy eating behaviours. Research indicates these programs also improve psychosocial outcomes such as resilience, socialization, self-esteem, and quality of life which aligns seamlessly with the Ministry of Education’s focus on Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills.

We live in the most complex food environment in human history. Evidence-based food literacy education relevant to today’s food environment is necessary to improve the health of current and future generations. Including food literacy in curricular expectations will simplify the achievement of your Ministry’s goal for preparing Ontario students for academic and personal success while training them with life skills and addressing society’s burden of chronic disease. Registered Dietitians working in Ontario’s Public Health...
Agencies have expertise in food literacy and curriculum development, and would be pleased to meet with your representatives to develop resources and supports for a food literacy curriculum for Ontario students.

We urge your support to ensure that Bill 216 is passed when legislature resumes in 2021.

Yours in health,

*Original signed by*

Mayor Andy Mitchell  
Chair, Board of Health

cc:  
Daryl Kramp, MPP Hastings-Lennox and Addington  
Dave Smith, MPP Peterborough-Kawartha  
David Piccini, MPP Northumberland-Peterborough South  
Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock  
Marit Stiles, MPP Davenport, Critic, Education  
France Gélinas, MPP Nickel Belt, Critic, Health Care  
Diane Lloyd, Chair, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board  
Michelle Griepsma, Chair, Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board  
André Blais, Directeur de l’éducation, Conseil Scolaire Catholique MonAvenir  
Dianne Dowling, Chair, Food Policy Council for KFL&A  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health  
Ontario Boards of Health  
Ontario Dietitians in Public Health  
Ontario Home Economics Association

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