June 7, 2017

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

Dear Minister Hoskins:

**Re: Assessment of the Healthy Menu Choices Act**

On behalf of our Board of Health, I am writing to you in support of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit’s call for transparency regarding the indicators of success of the newly implemented Healthy Menu Choices Act. Our Board believes that it is important to equip consumers to make informed food choices. Given the significant investment of resources it takes to implement the Healthy Menu Choices Act at a local level, we request that the provincial government communicate to all stakeholders how the impact of the Act will be assessed.

In addition to indicators of success of the newly implemented act, our board requests transparency regarding the evaluation of related promotional activities and campaigns led by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Possible considerations to evaluate include:

- the effectiveness of emphasizing calories (rather than a whole foods approach, emphasizing the importance of a variety of nutrients, from minimally processed foods);
- the effects of the marketing campaign comparing equally unhealthy choices, and use of messages with sexual overtones (e.g., food items stripping);
- short and long term effectiveness of act on choices made by Ontarians;
- possible adverse effects of labelling of calories alone in relation to disordered eating patterns and promoting healthy relationships with food; and
- accuracy of calories displayed on menus compared to what consumers are purchasing.

Our board of health is committed to protecting and promoting the health and well-being of our residents. We are supportive of evidence based interventions that accomplish health goals and would welcome information regarding the evaluation of both the Healthy Menu Choices Act, and the approach taken to promote Ministry-led awareness activities that support our local efforts.
Yours in health,

Mayor Mary Smith
Chair, Board of Health

/ag
Encl.

cc: Local MPPs
    Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, MOHLTC
    Association of Local Public Health Agencies
    Ontario Boards of Health
March 22, 2017

VIA EMAIL

The Honourable Eric Hoskins
Minister – Minister’s Office
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor St
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Hoskins:

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Board of Health is very concerned about two recent initiatives of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care – the Expert Panel on Public Health and the Healthy Menu Choices Act.

With respect to the Expert Panel on Public Health, you stated in your letter of January 18, 2017:

“The work of the Panel will include a review of various operational models for the integration of public health into the broader health system and the development of options and recommendations that will best align with the principles of health system transformation, enhance relationships between public health, LHINs and other public sector entities and improve public health capacity and delivery.”

We have learned that the work of the Expert Panel will be done in confidence and will not include consultation with local public health units. This is in contrast to the Liberal government’s commitment to transparency in its work. The Expert Panel will be making recommendations that could have a profound impact on how we do business, and yet we won’t have any opportunity to provide input into the discussion or the options being considered. To rectify this concern, the Board requests that all recommendations from the Expert Panel be made public, and that a formal consultation process be undertaken with all Ontario public health units before any decisions are made about the integration of public health into the broader health system.
The Honourable Eric Hoskins  
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The implementation of the Healthy Menu Choices Act requires a significant investment of resources at the local level and among the food premise industry. Concerns have been raised by other organizations about the effectiveness of this measure. Has the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care identified indicators of success that will assess if this investment is justified; and are these indicators being tracked? The Liberal government has publicly stated a commitment to accountability. The Board of Health requests that the Minister respect this commitment and notify all parties how the impact of the Healthy Menu Choices Act will be assessed.

Sincerely,

Anne Warren, Chair  
Board of Directors  
Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

AW/hb

cc: Steve Clark, MPP Leeds-Grenville  
    Randy Hillier, MPP Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington  
    Jack MacLaren, MPP Carleton-Mississippi Mills  
    Ontario Boards of Health