

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:**

Association of Ontario  
Public Health Business  
Administrators

Association of  
Public Health  
Epidemiologists  
in Ontario

Association of  
Supervisors of Public  
Health Inspectors of  
Ontario

Health Promotion  
Ontario

Ontario Association of  
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Association of  
Public Health Nursing  
Leaders

Ontario Dietitians in  
Public Health

January 20, 2021

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
5th Floor  
438 University Ave.  
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

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

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On behalf of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) and its member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations, I am writing to express our support of Bill 216, Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020.

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. Furthermore, healthy eating, cooking skills, and health are linked. Currently, there is a lack of introduction and opportunity to acquire cooking skills from parents, grandparents, and the school environment.

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. A recent review of research shows that interventions or programs that include food literacy and hands-on education for younger children is effective to increase intake of, preference for and willingness to try vegetables and fruit. This would make a strong case for bringing back food literacy programming in schools to improve population nutrition status, using a more upstream approach that targets Ontarians at a younger age to reduce risk for chronic diseases.

It is recommended that the current school curricula, from grade 1 to grade 12, undergo examination with respect to food literacy, and that the introduction of experiential food literacy and healthy eating training become a mandatory component of school curricula. Development and implementation of such curricula must be:

- culturally diverse,
- inclusive of foods and ingredients that are affordable for most families,
- evidenced-based and in accordance with current nutritional science,
- supported by adequate training for educators, and
- considerate of other important learning and physical activity space.

Local public health agencies have qualified staff and are well-positioned to provide nutritional expertise for the development and implementation of this curricula and associated teaching tools.

We would be pleased to discuss this with you further. To schedule a meeting, please have your staff contact Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, alPHA, at [loretta@alphaweb.org](mailto:loretta@alphaweb.org) or 416-595- 0006 x 222.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carmen McGregor". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Carmen McGregor,  
President

**Copy:** Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Daryl Kramp, MPP, Hastings—Lennox and Addington

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) is a not-for-profit organization that provides leadership to the boards of health and public health units in Ontario. alPHA advises and lends expertise to members on the governance, administration and management of health units. The Association also collaborates with governments and other health organizations, advocating for a strong, effective and efficient public health system in the province. Through policy analysis, discussion, collaboration, and advocacy, alPHA's members and staff act to promote public health policies that form a strong foundation for the improvement of health promotion and protection, disease prevention and surveillance services in all of Ontario's communities.