

February 11, 2019

Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier
Minister, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
80 Grosvenor St., Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9
christine.elliottco@pc.ola.org

Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister
Ministry of Education
900 Bay St., Mowat Block, 22nd Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2
lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org

Dear Ministers Elliott and Thompson:

Mandatory Food Literacy Curricula in Ontario Schools

On behalf of the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, we would like to express our support for the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington Board of Health's call to examine the current school curricula concerning food literacy, and the introduction of food literacy and food skills as a mandatory component of school curricula.

Food literacy and food skills are the foundation for healthy eating, encompassing factors including food and nutrition knowledge, and the skills necessary to prepare healthy and affordable meals. In Canada, food literacy has been in decline over the past few decades affecting all segments of society. The lack of essential food literacy skills coupled with changes in the food environment and increased practices in marketing of unhealthy food and beverages have made it a challenge for Ontarians to practice healthy eating habits. It has led to an increase of pre-prepared, packaged and convenience foods higher in fat, salt and sugar; and foods linked to a greater risk of diet-related chronic diseases.

The school setting is an opportunity to support students with knowledge and food skills that will equip them to make healthy decisions in a complex food environment. While, the current system makes food literacy curriculum available to students in high school, 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. Food literacy needs to be part of the mainstream school curriculum, incorporated in a cross-curricular approach starting at the elementary school level. This approach would ensure that healthy eating concepts are consistently taught, reinforced, and reflected as students move through the school years.

As the Ministry of Education engages in a consultation regarding the education system in Ontario, our Board of Health strongly urges that mandatory food literacy and food skills training be included in the school curricula.

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit thanks you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gary McNamara
Chair, WECHU Board of Health



Theresa Marentette, RN, MSc
Chief Executive Officer, Chief Nursing Officer

<https://www.wechu.org/board-meetings/september-2018-board-meeting>

Encl. KFL&A Public Health – Letter to Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris – April 2018

c: Ontario Boards of Health
Windsor-Essex Board of Health
Lisa Gretzky, MPP Windsor-West
Percy Hatfield, MPP Windsor-Tecumseh
Taras Natyshak, MPP Essex
Rick Nicholls, MPP Chatham-Kent-Essex
WEC local school boards
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Ophea and ODPH