



November 24, 2020

MPP Daryl Kramp,  
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Dianne Dowling, Chair  
Food Policy Council for KFL&A  
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Dear MPP Kramp and Ms. Dowling:

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

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH), the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system offers our support for **Bill 216 – Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020**. ODPH's mission is to advance public health nutrition through member and partner collaboration in order to improve population health and health equity locally and provincially.

Food literacy is an important life skill encompassing much more than food and cooking skills<sup>1</sup> and is essential for a solid foundation of healthy eating behaviours. We are pleased that Bill 216 will require school boards to offer experiential food literacy education to all Ontario students in grades 1 through 12. This requirement 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<sup>2</sup>. As well, youth (18-23 years) who have self-perceived cooking skills are more likely to have positive nutrition-related outcomes 10 years later (i.e., more frequent preparation of meals including vegetables, and less frequent consumption of fast food)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> which aligns seamlessly with the Ministry of Education's focus on Mental Health and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills<sup>5</sup>.

We live in the most complex food environment in human history<sup>6</sup>. Evidence-based food literacy education relevant to today's food environment is necessary to improve the health of current and future generations<sup>7</sup>. 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.

ODPH members with expertise in food literacy and curriculum development would be pleased to meet with your representatives develop resources and supports for a food literacy curriculum for Ontario students.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Smith, MPH RD  
Co-chair ODPH Executive and School Nutrition Workgroup

Via email to:

- MPP Kramp, [daryl.kramp@pc.ola.org](mailto:daryl.kramp@pc.ola.org)
- Dianne Dowling, Chair, Food Policy Council for KFL&A, [dowling@kos.net](mailto:dowling@kos.net)

Cc:

- Minister of Education Stephen Lecce (PC; King—Vaughan riding) – [stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org](mailto:stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org)
- Minister of Health Christine Elliott (PC; Newmarket—Aurora riding) – [christine.elliott@pc.ola.org](mailto:christine.elliott@pc.ola.org)
- Minister of OMAFRA Ernie Hardeman (PC; Oxford riding) – [minister.omafra@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.omafra@ontario.ca) / [ernie.hardeman@pc.ola.ca](mailto:ernie.hardeman@pc.ola.ca)
- Minister of Government and Consumer Services Lisa Thompson (PC; Huron—Bruce riding) – [lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org](mailto:lisa.thompson@pc.ola.org)
- Premier Doug Ford (PC; Etobicoke North riding) – [doug.fordco@pc.ola.org](mailto:doug.fordco@pc.ola.org)

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  - Donna Skelly (PC; Flamborough—Glanbrook) – [donna.skelly@pc.ola.org](mailto:donna.skelly@pc.ola.org)
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- Loretta Ryan, ED, Association of Local Public Health Agencies, [info@alphaweb.org](mailto:info@alphaweb.org)

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- 2) Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Mensah G. (2016). Evidence Brief: Impact of food skills programs on fruit and vegetable consumption among children and youth. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
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