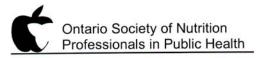
Lawrence Square 700 Lawrence Avenue, Suite 31 Toronto, ON M6A 3B4



La société ontarienne des professionnel(le)s de la nutrition en santé publique

October 6, 2011

Judith Wright
Deputy Minister of Health Promotion and Sport
College Park
18th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Re: Nutrition Resource Centre programs and services are essential supports

Dear Ms. Wright,

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians in public health in Ontario. We are writing to encourage the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport (MHPS) to continue support of the Nutrition Resource Centre (NRC), and to request that OSNPPH be invited to provide input into NRC's strategic planning process.

The NRC has excelled in providing valuable programs and services that are essential for promoting comprehensive healthy eating. Nutrition professionals and their colleagues in health units across Ontario rely on the quality work and support offered by the NRC. Highlights of the many benefits include:

- Unified, Credible Source. The NRC contributes vitally to consistency, credibility, and
 quality in messaging, materials, and programming, which results in enhanced quality
 assurance, standardization, coordination, sustainability and evaluation. Prior to the
 existence of NRC, individual health units developed their own programs, educational
 materials, and services often "reinventing the wheel".
- Increases Local Capacity. Because of NRC, health units are able to direct more time
 and expertise to local programming, innovation, knowledge exchange, and policy
 development. NRC's support to health units increases the capacity of health units to
 support child care facilities, schools, workplaces, recreation centres, and other
 community partners.
- Support to Meet the OPHS. The NRC has provided streamlined and coordinated assistance for public health programming across the province to meet the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS). In 2010, the NRC's¹ mapping document demonstrated how the current NRC programs, services, and resources assist health units in meeting many of the Ontario Public Health Standards. Some significant examples include:
 - the Eat Smart! School program and other tools² that support implementation of the Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy;
 - scientific evidence base for the Colour It Up! program, which was also pilottested and evaluated;



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- service to priority populations built into the Community Food Advisor (CFA) program, and the quality food literacy services these volunteers are trained to provide in their communities;
- o implementation support to the valid and reliable NutriSTEP™ tool^{3,4}; and evaluation of the Eat Smart! Workplace and Recreation programs⁵.

OSNPPH understands the need for change. However, if the NRC's hiatus is extended or permanent there will be negative consequences to public health and community nutrition. Already there have been repercussions for example, the Community Food Advisor (CFA) annual conference cancellation. CFAs are trained volunteers. Diminishing their recognition and development opportunities increases the risk of attrition which critically undermines local programs. The CFAs increase health units' capacity to meet public demands. The loss of CFAs will lead to unmet local need. When public health nutrition programs are unable to address this need, we see an increase in services being offered by unqualified persons.

If NRC services were to be substantially altered or discontinued, health units will be required to return to devoting much of their local resources to development and coordination of programs and materials. Negative consequences would include the potential collapse of local programs and services due to insufficient resources and supports, decrease in environmental influence, reduced ability to support community partners, and diminished capacity for programming quality and standardization, innovation, knowledge exchange and policy development.

OSNPPH looks forward to being involved in the strategic planning process to determine how NRC can continue to provide the quality programming and invaluable support that enables health units to better meet their mandated requirements as well as to respond effectively and efficiently to local needs. Please contact us to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Shannon Edmonstone, MAN, RD Co-Chair

Amy MacDonald, MScFN, RD Co-Chair

cc: Steve Harlow, Assistant Deputy Minister - Sport, Public Health and Community

cc: Laura Pisko-Bezruchko, Director – Standards, Programs and Community Development

cc: Laura Belfie, Manager – Public Health Units and Standards

cc: Amy Gartner, Program Coordinator

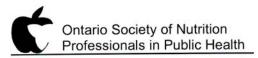
cc: Victoria Tobin, Program Coordinator

cc: Cindy Scythes, Program Manager, NRC

cc: Siu Mee Cheng, Executive Director, OPHA

cc: Linda Stewart, Executive Director, alPHa

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Footnotes

¹Nutrition Resource Centre Programs Mapped to the Ontario Public Health Standards (2010) http://www.nutritionrc.ca/programs/pdfs/nrc-mapped-ophs 23FE10.pdf

²Nutrition Resource Centre Handout Materials -Bake it up!, At a Glance Guide to School Food and Beverage Policy, Busy Bodies, Eat Right Be Active, Feeding Your Baby etc. http://www.nutritionrc.ca/resources/nrc-english.html

³Randall Simpson, J.A., Keller, H.H., Rysdale, L.A. and Beyers, J.E. (2008). Nutrition Screening Tool for Every Preschooler: validation and re-test reliability of a parent-administered questionnaire assessing nutrition risk of preschoolers. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 62:770-780.

⁴Rysdale LA, Witchell EC, Keller HH, Randall Simpson JA, Turfryer MC, McGibbon KA, Beyers JE. Parent perceptions of NutriSTEP and nutrition risk screening in a sample of Ontario preschool children. *Infant Child and Adolescent Nutrition* (2011 Aug), 3(4):197-204. Abstract: http://can.sagepub.com/content/3/4/197

⁵Eat Smart! Recreation Program Evaluation http://www.eatsmartontario.ca/node/52070