December 15, 2008

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier and
Minister of Research and Innovation
Room 281, Main Legislative Building
Queen’s Park
TORONTO ON M7A 1A1


Please be advised the Health & Social Services Committee of Regional Council considered the above matter and at a meeting held on December 10, 2008 Council adopted the following recommendations of the Committee:

"a) THAT the following recommendations of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit dated October 25, 2008 with respect to the cost of a nutritious food basket and poverty reduction, be endorsed:

'WHEREAS a nutritious diet is a basic requirement for health and well-being;

AND WHEREAS an inadequate income is the most significant barrier to a healthy diet;

AND WHEREAS Simcoe Muskoka residents receiving social assistance or minimum wage income cannot afford a nutritious diet after paying for household and other fixed costs;

AND WHEREAS poor nutrition impacts on child growth and development and leads to an increased risk of chronic and infectious diseases which cost more to treat and manage then to prevent;

AND WHEREAS ensuring people have enough funds to purchase an adequate and nutritious diet is an effective disease prevention strategy;

AND WHEREAS the Provincial Government has established a Cabinet Committee tasked with developing a provincial poverty reduction strategy for implementation in December 2008;"
AND WHEREAS there is now widespread concern that the implementation of this strategy may be delayed indefinitely due to a downturn in the provincial economy;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Simcoe Muskoka District Board of Health use a variety of communication methods to urge the provincial government to implement without delay a coordinated, long-term poverty reduction strategy that includes targets, timelines, a dedicated budget and ongoing evaluation. These communication methods will include a letter from the Board of Health to Premier McGuinty, the issuing of a press release on World Food Day, October 16, 2008 and the publication of a Medical Officer of Health newspaper column.

FURTHERMORE that a copy of the letter to Premier McGuinty and of this Resolution be forwarded to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Minister of Health Promotion, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, local MPP’s, the Ontario Public Health Association, Ontario Public Health Association Food Security Workgroup, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and local Boards of Health requesting that they endorse the implementation without delay of a provincial poverty reduction strategy.

AND FURTHERMORE that the Board of Health endorse the 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction Founding Declaration and its three priorities for a provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy and communicate this endorsement via email to Jennifer Posthumus, designated contact person for the 25 in 5 Network.

b) THAT the following recommendations of the Toronto Board of Health dated October 22, 2008 with respect to the cost of a nutritious food basket and poverty reduction, be endorsed:

' THAT the Board of Health request that the provincial and federal governments implement income support benefits and minimum wage rates based on the real cost of healthy living, including nutritious food, and indexed annually to reflect inflation;
THAT the Chair of the Board of Health and the Medical Officer of Health together with the Association of Local Public Health agencies and representatives of community organizations that serve low-income families, meet with the Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction, the Minister of Health Promotion, and the Minister of Community and Social Services, to discuss the results of the Nutritious Food Basket survey across Ontario, and ensure that the findings inform the provincial poverty reduction strategy; and

THAT this report be forwarded for support and action to the following key stakeholders: the City of Toronto's Community Development and Recreation Committee; the General Managers of Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, Children's Services, Long-term Care Homes and Services, and Parks, Forestry and Recreation; the Ontario Ministers of Health Promotion, Community and Social Services, Children and Youth Services and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; the Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion at Health Canada; the Association of Local Public Health Agencies; the Ontario Public Health Association’s Community Food Security Workgroup; Ontario Boards of Health; the Association of Ontario Health Centres; the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health, the Dieticians of Canada and all local MPs and MPPs.; and

c) THAT the Premier of Ontario, Ministers of Children and Youth Services, Community and Social Services, Finance, Health and Long-Term Care, Health Promotion, Durham’s MPPs, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health, aIPHa, OMSSA, and all Ontario Boards of Health be so advised."

Pat M. Madill, AMCT, CMM I
Regional Clerk

PMM/lf

c: The Honourable D. Mathews, Minister of Children and Youth Services
The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services
The Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance
c. cont:

The Honourable David Caplan, Minister of Health & Long Term Care
The Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
L. Scott, MPP (Haliburton/Victoria/Brock)
W. Arthurs, MPP (Pickering/Ajax/Uxbridge)
C. Elliott, MPP (Whitby/Ajax)
J. O'Toole, MPP (Durham)
J. Ouellette, MPP (Oshawa)
J. Dickson, MPP (Ajax/Pickering)
D. Williams, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health
A. Stuart, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister
L. Stewart, Executive Director, alPHA
K. Heineck, Executive Director, OMSSA
All Ontario Boards of Health
R.J. Kyle, Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health