

Board Correspondence

November 2023

Date	From	Subject
October 16, 2023	Public Health Sudbury & Districts	Letter to Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks re: Calls for expansion for outdoor air quality monitoring stations and the Air Quality Health Index across Northern Ontario.
October 18, 2023	alPHa	October 2023 InfoBreak
October 27, 2023	Public Health Sudbury & Districts	Resolution #60-23: Public Health Strengthening and Chronic Disease Prevention.
October 27, 2023	Public Health Sudbury & Districts	Resolution #61-23: Support for a funded Healthy School Food Program in Budget 2024 (Federal).



Public Health
Santé publique
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

October 16, 2023

VIA EMAIL

The Honourable Minister David Piccini
Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Piccini:

Re: Calls for expansion of outdoor air quality monitoring stations and the Air Quality Health Index across Northern Ontario

Expanding air quality monitoring stations across Northern Ontario, to provide comprehensive data to inform the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI), is needed now more than ever.

With climate change, wildfire is an increasing risk, particularly in Northern Ontario. Exposure to wildfire smoke can cause health impacts including headaches, cough, dizziness, chest pains, shortness of breath, asthma attacks and irregular heart beat¹. Some people are at higher risk of health problems when exposed to wildfire smoke, including older adults, pregnant people, people who smoke, infants and young children, people working or exercising outdoors and people with existing illnesses or chronic health conditions².

The AQHI is a tool for Ontarians to be informed of the health risks from local air pollution and take recommended actions to protect their health³. However, many northern Ontario communities do not have local outdoor air monitoring stations and therefore do not benefit from the AQHI.

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Letter to the Honourable Minister David Piccini
Re: Calls for expansion of outdoor air quality monitoring stations and the Air
Quality Health Index across Northern Ontario
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At its meeting on September 21, 2023, the Board of Health carried the following
resolution #50-23:

WHEREAS according to recent research, climate change in Ontario is expected to increase the number of wildfires caused by human activity and by lightening by 20% and 62%, respectively, between the periods of 1975-1990 and 2020-2040, and it is expected that the increases will be even greater in parts of Northern Ontario; and

WHEREAS wildfire smoke can impact air quality and cause health effects hundreds of kilometers from the fire zone; and

WHEREAS many northern Ontario communities do not have local outdoor air monitoring stations and therefore do not benefit from the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI), a tool for Ontarians to be informed of the health risks from local air pollution and take recommended actions to protect their health; and

WHEREAS there is only one air quality monitoring station within Sudbury and districts that provides data for the AQHI, being one of only five stations across Northern Ontario; and

WHEREAS expanding air quality monitoring stations and the reach of the AQHI to more communities in the North would benefit communities' health, and would provide a more robust surveillance system on wildfire smoke impacts;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts endorse the letters dated July 5, 2023 from the Porcupine Health Unit and August 1, 2023, from the Timiskaming Health Unit to the Honourable Minister, David Piccini, calling for the installation of Air Quality Monitoring Stations in their respective service areas; and

FURTHER THAT air quality monitoring stations and the AQHI be expanded across Northern Ontario to improve opportunities for health for all.

The AQHI can increase awareness of impacts of air pollutants, including those created by wildfire smoke, and reduce or eliminate serious health impacts through adherence to health protective advice. Access to the AQHI, informed by local data, could benefit everyone. At the community level, it can have a significant positive impact when used to inform health protective policies, for example for outdoor recreational programs, daycares, and long-term care homes.

Letter to the Honourable Minister David Piccini

Re: Calls for expansion of outdoor air quality monitoring stations and the Air Quality Health Index across Northern Ontario

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With this in mind, we support the Timiskaming Health Unit and Porcupine Health Unit calling for installation of air quality monitoring stations in their respective service areas, and further call for expansion of air quality monitoring stations and the AQHI across Northern Ontario.

Sincerely,



René Lapierre
Chair, Board of Health

cc: The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier of Ontario, Minister of Health
The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Member of Parliament, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
The Honourable Mark Holland, Member of Parliament, Minister of Health
Carol Hughes, Member of Parliament, Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing
Marc Serré, Member of Parliament, Nickel Belt
Viviane Lapointe, Member of Parliament, Sudbury
Michael Mantha, Member of Provincial Parliament, Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing
France Gélinas, Member of Provincial Parliament, Nickel Belt
Jamie West, Member of Provincial Parliament, Sudbury
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
All Ontario Boards of Health

¹ Government of Canada. *Wildfire smoke 101: Wildfire smoke and your health*.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/wildfire-smoke-health.html>. Accessed 2023/10/04.

² Government of Canada. *Wildfire smoke 101: Wildfire smoke and your health*.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/wildfire-smoke-health.html>. Accessed 2023/10/04.

³ Government of Canada. About the Air Quality Health Index. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/air-quality-health-index/about.html>. Accessed 2023/10/04



Public Health
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SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

October 27, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health

The Honourable Michael Tibollo
Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

Dear Premier Ford and Provincial Ministers Jones and Tibollo:

Re: Public Health Strengthening and Chronic Disease Prevention

On behalf of the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts, please accept this correspondence highlighting our commitment to health promotion and chronic disease prevention.

At its meeting on October 19, 2023, the Board of Health carried the following resolution #60-23:

WHEREAS the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts is committed to ensuring it addresses the public health needs and health equity in its catchment area, as aligned with board of health requirements under the Health Protection and Promotion Act and Ontario Public Health Standards; and

WHEREAS Health Promotion Ontario's White Paper on the Value of Local Health Promotion in Ontario recommends strong and sustained investment in local health promotion by public health units to ensure that health promotion is prioritized on an ongoing basis; and

WHEREAS the Board recognizes that there are opportunities for system improvements as part of the review of board roles and responsibilities announced under the government's Public Health Strengthening initiative, including an assessment of its role in chronic disease prevention through health promotion interventions; and

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Letter to Premier Ford and Provincial Ministers Jones and Tibollo
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WHEREAS chronic diseases are mostly preventable, are the cause of 75% of deaths in Ontario, and incur \$10.5 billion in direct health care costs in the province; and

WHEREAS as the scope and intensity of infectious disease risks increase in the context of finite resources, there is a risk of under-resourcing public health actions that work on longer horizon chronic disease prevention;

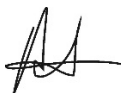
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT in the context of the Public Health Strengthening roles and responsibilities deliberations, the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts urges all health system actors to remain committed to maintaining appropriate investments in health promotion and chronic disease prevention, while ensuring health risks associated with its health protection work are managed;

AND FURTHER THAT the Board request that the Chief Medical Officer of Health ensure proactive local engagement in the sector-driven review of the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Chronic diseases account for a substantial burden on the health of Ontarians and the health care system. They are the leading cause of death in Ontario, and they disproportionately impact populations who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, intensifying inequities. Chronic diseases are expensive to treat but they are largely preventable. Health promotion and chronic disease prevention work is critical to reducing the health and economic burden of chronic diseases.

The Board of Health respectfully urges the Provincial Government to ensure all health system actors, including local Public Health, are supported to invest in coordinated action to promote health and reduce the burden of chronic diseases, affecting so many Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Penny Sutcliffe, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer

cc: Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
Heather Schramm, Acting Director, Health Promotion and Prevention Policy and Programs Branch, Ministry of Health
Susan Stewart, Chair, Health Promotion Ontario Executive Committee
Michael Sherar, President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario
Matthew Anderson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Health
Brian Kytory, Chief Regional Officer, Ontario Health North East & North West
France G elinas, Member of Provincial Parliament, Nickel Belt
Jamie West, Member of Provincial Parliament, Sudbury
Michael Mantha, Member of Provincial Parliament, Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing
All Ontario Boards of Health



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October 27, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Finance

Honourable Jenna Sudds
Ministry of Families, Children and Social Development

Honourable Lawrence MacAulay
Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos
Ministry of Public Services and Procurement

Dear Federal Ministers Freeland, Sudds, MacAulay, and Duclos:

Re: Support for a Funded Healthy School Food Program in Budget 2024 (Federal)

At its meeting on October 19, 2023, the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts carried the following resolution #61-23:

WHEREAS a universal publicly funded student nutrition program can positively impact students' nourishment, health and well-being, behaviours and attitudes, school connectedness, and academic success; and

WHEREAS the current provincial student nutrition program strives to offer a breakfast, snack, and/or lunch to students each school day, but not all schools have adequate financial and human resources to offer them; and

WHEREAS the annual monitoring of food affordability in Sudbury and districts demonstrates that some families may struggle to purchase food, and a universal fully-funded student nutrition program can help to ensure no child is left out of the program due to their family's ability to pay; and

WHEREAS the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts passed motion [02-20](#) supporting a universal publicly funded healthy school food program; and

WHEREAS although the Ontario government recently announced an additional \$5 million this year in the provincial Student Nutrition Program and the First Nations Student Nutrition Program, more support is needed to

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ensure a fully-funded universal student nutrition program; and

WHEREAS the federal government announced its commitment to work toward the creation of a National School Food Policy to help Canadian communities access healthy food in the [Food Policy for Canada](#); and

WHEREAS the Ontario Public Health Standards requires boards of health to support and participate with other partners in advancing school food policy and programming using population health assessment and surveillance, policy development; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts support the [recommendations](#) submitted by the Coalition for Healthy School Food to the Government of Canada as part of advance consultations for Budget 2024:

Allocate \$1 billion over five years and collaborate with provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners to provide them with an initial \$200 million as soon as possible to fund existing school food programs; and

Create a separate School Food Infrastructure Fund grants program of, at minimum, \$50 million; and

Negotiate independent School Food Policy agreements with First Nation, Inuit and Métis leadership to ensure long-term and sustainable funding for Indigenous school nutritious meal programs; and

THAT the Board calls on the Federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development for investment in healthy school food in Budget 2024, as presented in the House of Commons' online [e-4586](#) (Food and drink); and

FURTHER THAT The Board share this motion with relevant stakeholders, including Ontario Boards of Health and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aLPHa).

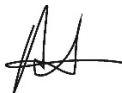
Currently, Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program in place. In Ontario, the current student nutrition program faces inconsistent year-to-year funding, posing barriers to stability and sustainability and impacting full implementation of the program, such that all students can benefit from proper nourishment. The patchwork of funding sources compromises the quantity and quality of food served, and the availability of adequate infrastructure and human resources to offer a student nutrition program where all children are able to benefit from.

In the [Food Policy for Canada](#), the Government of Canada announced the intention to “engage with provinces, territories, and key stakeholder groups to work toward the creation of the National School Food Program”ⁱ. Despite this intention, there was no financial commitment made to establish a National School Food Program in the 2023 federal budget.

The Board of Health is pleased to join many leaders from across Canada in supporting a publicly funded universal school food program model that can positively impact student's nourishment, health and wellbeing, behaviours and attitudes, school connectedness, and academic success. The proposed universal program model with leadership by Canada, and Ontario's Ministries would enable all students to have the equal opportunity to eat healthy meals at school everyday, and that no child is left out due to their family's ability to pay.

Thank you for your attention on this important issue. Given the impact of nutrition related children's health and wellbeing, we trust you will advance this work quickly and so that no child is left out.

Sincerely,



Penny Sutcliffe, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer

cc: Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier of Ontario, Minister of Health
Jamie West, Local Member of Provincial Parliament, Sudbury
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Danny Viotto, Director of Education, Huron Superior Catholic District School Board
Joanne B enard, Director of Education, Sudbury Catholic District School Board
Lesleigh Dye, Director of Education, District School Board Ontario North East
Lucia Reece, Director of Education, Algoma District School Board
Paul Henry, Directeur de l' ducation, Conseil scolaire catholique Nouvelon
S ebastien Fontaine, Directeur de l' ducation, Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario
Sylvie Petroski, Directrice de l' ducation, Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivi eres
Debbie Field, Coalition for Healthy School Food
Carol Dodge, Executive Director, Better Beginnings Better Futures
Ontario Boards of Health

Letter to Federal Ministers Freeland, Sudds, MacAulay, and Duclos
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ⁱ Government of Canada. (2020, November 17). *The Food Policy for Canada*.
<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/department/initiatives/food-policy/food-policy-canada>