

Honourable Deb Matthews
Minister for Health and Long Term Care
Government of Ontario
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor St.
Toronto ON M7A2C4

May 21, 2013

Dear Minister Matthews,

Re: No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy

The Ottawa Food Policy Council (OFPC) welcomes the comprehensive strategy submitted by the 18-member Healthy Kids Panel, entitled *No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy*, and encourages the Ministry to take immediate action to implement its recommendations.

We draw particular attention to item 3.6: *Speedy Implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy*, including actions to “put food in the budget” to make healthy food an option for those on social assistance. According to *The Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in Ottawa for 2012*, a family of four can anticipate spending approximately \$745/month on healthy, nutritious foods. This same family living on social assistance with all available tax benefits would have a monthly income of about \$2032 (*The Price of Eating Well in Ottawa 2012*) and rent of \$1412, leaving them short \$125 if they are eating to meet basic nutrient requirements, with no funds for anything else. Also, the Ottawa Food Bank serves 48,000 clients a month - 37% of whom are children - through its network of over 140 member agencies. These are indicators of food insecurity in our city due to both low wages and inadequate social assistance payments. Addressing the root causes of poverty, of which food insecurity is merely a symptom, will ensure that disadvantaged kids will be positioned to benefit from the broader recommendations.

We also support Recommendation 1.4 *Support and encourage breastfeeding for at least the first six months of life*. The Ottawa Food Action Plan recommends many efforts to support breastfeeding including ensuring that more and more locations are welcoming to breastfeeding mothers.

The OFPC provides policy support for a food system in Ottawa that emphasizes social equity, economic viability, and environmental sustainability through the entire food cycle. Be assured that the Ottawa Food Policy Council will support the efforts to implement the *No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy* in the Ottawa area.

Signed,



Christina Marchant, Chair
on behalf of the Ottawa Food Policy Council