December 4, 2006

Dear Colleague,

The ministries of Education and Health Promotion are proud to introduce to you an exciting initiative related to Ontario’s Healthy Schools strategy – our Healthy Schools Recognition Program.

You know that a healthy school environment supports student success, and you also have a perspective about what defines a “healthy school”. We’ve identified common elements: Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Bullying Prevention, Personal Safety and Injury Prevention, Substance Use, Healthy Growth, Mental Health, and others that may be uniquely relevant to your school.

We know many schools and boards are already doing great work to create healthier schools. Thank you and congratulations! Our Healthy Schools Recognition Program presents dozens of opportunities that will allow you to choose how best to extend your current efforts. The goal is to create the healthiest school possible.

To develop this program, we worked with a broad spectrum of individuals and groups committed to improving student success through healthier school environments. In fact, a Working Table of over 25 groups and associations helped us develop a comprehensive framework – Foundations for a Healthy School – along with a number of additional tools that will be available at the launch. Schools can develop or expand their own healthy school initiative. We will urge schools to share news of successes, and as a result, we will recognize each and every healthy school for their new efforts.

Accept the challenge of creating a healthier school and you may find:

- students become leaders as they identify and work on healthy school initiatives;
- more parents volunteer for initiatives that help their child; and
- a community eager to get involved in new school-based efforts and ideas.

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Each school’s efforts will build on initiatives our government has already introduced to help make schools healthier places to learn, including:

- creating nutrition guidelines for food and beverages in elementary school vending machines;
- mandating daily physical activity for students in Grades 1 to 8;
- increasing community access to schools;
- providing additional resources to community organizations to develop active, safe routes to school; and
- introducing the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program.

Once the Healthy Schools Recognition Program is launched, we hope that your school will commit to advancing Ontario’s healthy schools vision. In the interim, please share the enclosed tools with your school leaders and get ready to learn more about the Healthy Schools Recognition Program.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to Ontario’s students.

Sincerely,

Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education
Province of Ontario

Honourable Jim Watson
Minister of Health Promotion
Province of Ontario

c: Chairs of District School Boards
   Directors of Education
   Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities