

May 10, 2010

Board of Health, City of Toronto

**To the Toronto Medical Officer of Health,
Dr. David McKeown and Members of the Board of Health**

For the start of Nurses' Week, as members of the Street Nurses Network, an organization of front line nurses and nurse practitioners who for 20 years have worked with homeless and under housed individuals and families, the most vulnerable members of society, we are writing to alert you of the looming health crisis our clients and all those living on social assistance will be facing with the announcement of the cut of the Special Diet Supplement in the last Ontario budget.

With more than 75% of people's income going towards rent, the Special Diet Allowance, however inadequate, has allowed our clients on social assistance to meet some of their nutritional requirements. It is well known that poverty and food insecurity present the biggest health challenges to the most vulnerable. Rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and depression are well known to increase significantly with poverty. Children's overall health is equally affected and holds a lifetime negative impact.

Our clients and many others struggle daily. They have no teeth or horrendous oral health, have untreated diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, malnourished with weight loss or obesity and overwhelmingly challenged with depression and post traumatic stress disorder.

The cut of the Special Diet Allowance is the single most inhumane act of this provincial government and must be reinstituted immediately.

On behalf of the Street Nurses Network, we are asking members of this council to write to Premier McGuinty, Minister of Health Deb Matthews and Community and Social Services Minister Madeleine Meilleur calling for an immediate reinstatement of the Special Diet Allowance and for the province to keep true to its poverty reduction strategy and work towards raising the rates by a minimum of 40 %.

As front line workers, we know this can make a positive difference in the health and well being of our clients and all those receiving social assistance. Please act now.
We plan to depute this item at your next BOH meeting in June.

Thank you,

Anne Egger, RNEC
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Nanette Lang, RN, MN
Celina Carter, Primary Health Care Nurse
Shona Mackenzie, PHCNP
Jane Boudebab, PHCNP
Laura Hanson, RN, MN
Emily Cooper, RN, MN
Tracey Collins, RN, BN, MN, ANP
Cathy Crowe, RN
Cathie Simpson, RNEC
Sarah Innis, RNEC
Anita Young, RN
Members of Street Nurses Network

Cc: Premier Dalton McGuinty
Minister of Health Deb Matthews

Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur
RNAO Executive Director President Doris Grinspun
RNAO President David McNeil
NPAO President Paula Carere