



Board of Health

John Filion

Office of the Chair

May 10, 2010

Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, MPP
Minister of Community and Social Services
6th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister Meilleur:

I am writing this letter as the Chair of the Toronto Board of Health (BOH).

At its March 22, 2010 meeting, the Board of Health approved the following motion:

"The Board of Health requested the Chair of the Board of Health to write to the Minister of Community and Social Services requesting the Minister to:

- a. continue the Special Diet Allowance (SDA) Program as part of Ontario's social assistance system; and
- b. implement the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal's decision to provide adequate financial support to those eligible."

On March 25th, the 2010 Ontario Budget was released and it stipulated that the SDA will be replaced by a new nutritional supplement program that would be administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on behalf of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This new program would be medically based and would help individuals with severe medical needs that are on social assistance.

As Chair of the BOH, I am raising serious concerns about this decision. I want to emphasize the need to continue to provide those who have special medical conditions such as multiple sclerosis, diabetes and heart disease with assistance to enable them to pay for diets generally recognized by the medical community as necessary to deal with their conditions. I also want to support the call for open and transparent consultations with poverty groups and health care stakeholders to ensure that the new program does not further endanger the health of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "John Filion".

Councillor John Filion
Chair, Toronto Board of Health