

Media Release

New Minister of Health Promotion encouraged to make a real impact on health of Ontarians

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto, ON. (July 6, 2005) Premier Dalton McGuinty's announcement of a new Minister for Health Promotion is welcome news in a province where health care costs are spiralling and insufficient resources are invested in prevention and health promotion. This appointment positions Ontario to lead Canada by championing a multi-sectoral approach to health promotion in order to help people and society become and remain healthy.

Preventing chronic diseases, which contribute to 75% of deaths in Canada at a cost of \$28 billion yearly, means recognizing that good health is inextricably linked to living conditions. Income, housing and education influence the personal health choices we make about diet, exercise, and smoking. In order to make a real and lasting impact on the health of Ontarians, the new Ministry must address underlying factors that determine health, illness and social problems. For instance, Ontario quickly needs an expansion of inclusive health promotion strategies that target the homeless, Aboriginal people, women, and new immigrants; a greater investment in early childhood development; and policy change to narrow the health gap between wealthy and poor.

“We hope that Minister Watson and Premier McGuinty will take Ontario farther than other jurisdictions in defining healthy public policy, and not rely just on encouraging the public to engage in healthy lifestyles,” says Connie Clement, Executive Director of the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse and Chair of the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.

The appointment of Minister Watson paves the way for Ontario to 'move upstream' and bring health promotion out from the shadow of the acute care system. To be successful, Ontario must avoid ministries that work in isolation so that 'silo-thinking' does not hamper efforts. We count on Minister Watson to collaborate across government ministries and with local organizations.

“Collaborative approaches to health promotion that address healthy lifestyles *and* living conditions are flourishing in the health promotion sector at the local level. We look forward to working closely with the new Ministry to share success stories and contribute to creating a healthier Ontario,” says Clement.

For more information contact:

Connie Clement, Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse at 416-408-2249 ext. 273.
Krissa Fay, Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse at 416-408-2249 ext. 275.