



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health  
FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health  
DATE: 2013 October 17

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## PROMOTING A HEALTHY WORKPLACE NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT

### Recommendations

*It is recommended:*

1. *That the Board of Health endorse the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health's [Call to Action: Creating a Healthy Workplace Nutrition Environment](#); and further,*
2. *That the Board of Health communicate its support by completing the Endorsement Form (attached as Appendix A) and notifying the following groups of its support: Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health; Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health; Association of Local Public Health Agencies; Ontario Public Health Association; the Honourable Deb Matthews, Ontario Minister of Health and Long-term Care; and, Local MPPs.*

### Key Points

- Over 99% of Canadians do not meet recommendations for a healthy diet; poor eating habits contribute to an increased risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer.
- Most employed adults spend at least 60% of their waking hours at work and eat at least one meal per day in the workplace.
- Essential elements of a healthy workplace nutrition environment and recommendations for action by all stakeholders are available.
- Health Unit staff were recently trained on the Health Unit's updated **Policy 8-200: Food: Promoting Healthy Choices** that provides financial, food safety and nutrition requirements for any food and/or beverages purchased for corporate business, educational or community functions with Health Unit funds.

### Background

Over 99% of Canadians do not meet recommendations for a healthy diet, and these poor eating habits contribute to an increased risk of chronic disease. The workplace is an ideal setting to promote healthy eating, as most employed adults spend at least 60% of their waking hours at work and eat at least one meal per day in the workplace.

The Ontario Public Health Standards mandate that Boards of Health use a comprehensive health promotion approach to increase the capacity of workplaces to develop and implement healthy policies and programs, and to create or enhance supportive environments for healthy eating and healthy weights.

The Workplace Nutrition Advisory Group (WNAG) of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) strives to improve the nutrition environment in Ontario workplaces. The WNAG published an evidence-based, comprehensive report entitled [Call to Action: Creating a Healthy Workplace Nutrition Environment](#)<sup>®</sup>.

The [Call to Action](#) and [Key Messages](#) outline nine essential elements of a healthy workplace nutrition environment and contain recommendations for action by all stakeholders (e.g., employers, food service

operators, food distributors, union members, group benefits insurance companies, the provincial government and public health agencies).

The nine essential elements of a healthy workplace nutrition environment are:

- Organizational commitment to a positive healthy eating culture
- Supportive social eating environment
- Supportive physical eating environment
- Access to healthy, reasonably priced, culturally appropriate food
- Credible nutrition education and support for employees and their families
- Nutrition education for key decision makers and intermediaries provided by a Registered Dietitian
- Access to dietetic services
- Safe food practices and accommodation of special dietary needs
- Nutrition policies that encourage healthy eating

The WNAG is currently developing implementation guides and tools to support public health staff, workplaces and other key stakeholders to achieve the essential elements outlined in the Call to Action.

### Opportunities for Action

October is Healthy Workplace Month, and the OSNPPH WNAG is seeking endorsement of the Call to Action from local public health agencies in Ontario, and from provincial and national health promotion organizations. To date, the Call to Action has been endorsed by: the Association of Local Public Health Agencies; the Ontario Workplace Health Coalition; Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health; and Algoma Public Health. As well, several other public health units are in the process of seeking their Boards' endorsement of this important initiative. It is recommended that the Middlesex-London Board of Health endorse the Call to Action and communicate its support by signing the Endorsement Form (attached as [Appendix A](#)) to facilitate the necessary action that is required across the province to bring recognition to this issue by public health agencies and all stakeholders who play a role in creating and enhancing the nutrition environment within Ontario's workplaces.

As leaders and role models for workplace wellness, Health Unit staff were recently trained on the Health Unit's updated Policy 8-200: Food: Promoting Healthy Choices ([Appendix B](#)) to promote healthy food choices, safe food handling practices and the use of local foods at Health Unit functions. This policy provides financial, food safety and nutrition requirements for any foods and/or beverages purchased with Health Unit funds for corporate business, educational or community functions. In addition, a Health Unit Registered Dietitian assists other London and Middlesex County workplaces to create healthier workplace nutrition environments. The [Call to Action](#) can be utilized by Health Unit staff to support workplaces in implementing any of the essential elements of a healthy nutrition environment.

This report was prepared by Ms. Kim Leacy, Registered Dietitian and Ms. Linda Stobo, Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention & Tobacco Control Team.



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<p><b>This report addresses</b> the following requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards (2008): Chronic Disease Prevention 4, 5, 11, 12</p>
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