



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 October 17

THE HEALTHY KIDS PANEL – ONTARIO’S ACTION PLAN FOR HEALTH CARE

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 114-13 re The Healthy Kids Panel – Ontario’s Action Plan for Health Care be received for information.

Key Points

- About 30 % of children and youth - almost one in every three children – are now at an unhealthy weight.
- By 2040, up to 70 % of today’s children will be overweight or obese adults and almost half of children will be at an unhealthy weight.
- In an effort to promote a healthier start in life, the Provincial Government’s Ontario Healthy Kid’s Panel has set a goal for Ontario to achieve a 20% reduction in childhood obesity by 2018.
- Current Health Unit programming includes a multi-strategy approach to reduce childhood obesity.

Background

A priority of [Ontario’s Action Plan for Health Care](#) is to keep Ontario healthy. As such, the Government of Ontario formed the Healthy Kids Panel which consists of experts from a variety of sectors, including healthcare, academia, industry and Aboriginal communities. The scope of the Panel’s work includes:

- The identification of the specific factors that impact childhood obesity rates in Ontario
- Identification and prioritization of the multi-sectoral strategies that have the potential to address childhood obesity in Ontario.

The Healthy Kids Panel recently released a report entitled [No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy](#). The Executive Summary is attached as [Appendix A](#). It identifies that the strategy sets a goal to reduce childhood obesity by 20 % in five years. The startling statistics speak to the urgency of this matter. Although the *Healthy Kid’s Panel* refers to their target as ‘bold’, they expect it is ‘feasible and achievable’.

The over-arching goals of the strategy is to make children’s health everyone’s priority. This entails investing in child health through a variety of activities, including:

- Maintaining current funding levels
- Leveraging and repurposing government funding
- Establishing a public-private philanthropic trust fund that relates to innovation

The use of evidence, monitoring progress, and ensuring accountability are also identified as components of this strategy.

Recommendations from the Report

Report recommendations are meant to lay a foundation which will benefit the health of children and reduce future health care related spending.

The three strategic recommendations from the report include:

- Starting all kids on the path to health by enhancing prenatal care for families and promoting breastfeeding
- Changing the food environment to increase the availability of healthy choices and expand nutrition programs in schools
- Building healthy communities that encourage healthy eating and active living. This will consist of:
 - Developing a comprehensive social marketing program whereby the program not only targets children and youth, but also parents.
 - Making schools hubs for child health and community engagement
 - Creating healthy environments for preschool children
 - Developing the knowledge and skills of key professionals to support parents
 - Ensuring families have timely access to specialized obesity programs

As well the report identifies provincial strategies that are working upstream to address the underlying causes of unhealthy weights. These approaches, along with support for health inequities reductions programming, will be crucial for addressing childhood obesity and its health impacts.

Conclusion/Next Steps

This report aligns with much existing Health Unit programming. Health Unit staff members remain committed to implementing obesity reduction strategies in partnership with the County of Middlesex and the City of London, the Child & Youth Network and other community stakeholders. In addition, the recommendations of this report support the Health Unit's strategic direction in the area of healthy eating and physical activity.

Additional considerations for the Health Unit as it moves forward may include working with community partners to:

- Make schools hubs for child health and community engagement.
- Ensure families have timely access to focused obesity programs.
- Enhance the involvement of parents.
- Continue to build upon current upstream approaches, including programming that relate to the [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), [Mental Health and Addictions Strategy](#), and health inequities reductions initiatives within the community.

This report was prepared by Ms. Deb Fenlon, Public Health Nurse and Ms. Diane Bewick, Director & Chief Nursing Officer, Family Health Services.



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<p>This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Reproductive Health Standard, Child Health Standard and Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention Standard.</p>
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