



Letter to Minister

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Dear Minister _____:

World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated in Canada from October 1 to 7 and presents a valuable opportunity to remind Canadians (Ontarians/etc.) about the benefits and importance of breastfeeding. This year's theme, **Exclusive Breastfeeding: The Gold Standard – Safe, Sound, Sustainable**, will help Canadians celebrate the valuable contribution that breastfeeding women make towards the health and well-being of infants and young children. As well, it enables our communities to develop structures to encourage and support mothers to implement the breastfeeding recommendations as adopted by the World Health Organization and recommended by Health Canada.

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with the introduction of safe and appropriate complementary foods starting at six months, and continued breastfeeding for two years or more.

WHA Resolution 54.2 May 2001

At a time when our societies are concerned about rising rates of childhood obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, exclusive breastfeeding provides a no-cost way to protect the health of infants and their mothers and reduce the risk of these chronic diseases. When infants are not breastfed they are also at increased risk of childhood cancer, asthma, ear and respiratory infections, allergies, and gastrointestinal infections. Formula fed babies also score lower on intelligence and vocabulary tests than their breastfed counterparts. For the mother, not breastfeeding means higher risk of breast, ovarian and other cancers.

In celebration of World Breastfeeding Week, and to affirm the valuable contribution made by thousands of breastfeeding mothers to the health of our youngest citizens, I respectfully request that your Ministry:

- Supports the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and relevant World Health Assembly Resolutions to remove the influence of the infant-formula and baby-food products companies on a mother's decision to breastfeed.
- Provides financial assistance for the Baby-Friendly Initiative to help implement breastfeeding support structures for maternity services and communities.
- Increases funding for infant and young child nutrition programs to provide breastfeeding support to mothers in high needs communities.

Sincerely,

(your name)

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