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March 20, 2013

Dr. Doug Weir
President
Ontario Medical Association
150 Bloor Street West, Suite 900
Toronto ON M5S 3C1

Dear Dr. Weir:

As Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, I would like to commend the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) for its position paper, *When Antibiotics Stop Working*, and for its leadership in addressing this important issue that affects us all.

The paper highlights the importance of a multi-sectoral response, both provincially and nationally, which I fully support. We also need to recognize the importance of the primary prevention of infections as a key factor in reducing the need for antibiotics. By keeping Ontarians healthy through health promotion and disease prevention efforts such as immunization, as well as addressing the risk factors for the development of chronic diseases, we can make significant headway in reducing the impact of antibiotic resistance.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has implemented a number of disease prevention programs such as the use of the pneumococcal vaccine which reduces the incidence of pneumonia, sepsis and meningitis in all age groups. Likewise, publicly funded immunization programs for children, high-risk adults and seniors, such as the Universal Influenza Immunization Program, have been put in place to prevent bacterial complications of viral infections which often require treatment with antibiotics.

Other ministry led initiatives to prevent antibiotic resistance in the province include:

- Establishment of mandatory public reporting of two antibiotic resistant organisms by hospitals as part of a comprehensive plan to create transparency in Ontario's hospital system;
- Establishment of a voluntary *Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae* (CRE) surveillance program for hospitals, starting in December 2011;
- Development of an Antimicrobial Stewardship Program to provide tools and guidance for the effective management of antimicrobial use in hospitals and in our communities - in collaboration with Public Health Ontario and the Ontario Hospital Association;
- Participation in the development of common information regarding antibiotic resistance in collaboration with other provincial, territorial and federal agencies; and,
- Participation in Health Canada's technical discussions on the modernization of the federal veterinary drug regulatory framework to ensure that issues of antibiotic access, importation and use by the animal health sector are addressed appropriately.

I would like to once again thank the Ontario Medical Association for its interest in and attention to this increasingly important issue.

The ministry continues to work closely with its many partners in both the human health and agricultural sectors to address new scientific developments pertaining to the development and management of antibiotic resistance.

We look forward to engaging you as part of our collective response to this important issue.

Yours truly,

Original Signed

Arlene King, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health