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Charitable Registration No. 89031 4875 RR0001

February 8, 2015

The Honourable Eric Hoskins  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
10th Floor, Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Hoskins,

I am writing to you on behalf of all those who are now affected by Lyme disease in Ontario. Lyme Ontario, formerly known as the Lyme Disease Association of Ontario, has been working hard for more than twenty years advocating for heightened awareness of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases and for the provision of up-to-date, evidence based science for healthcare providers and physicians. As well, our organization has funded several entomological studies on ticks and the pathogens they transmit which have been published in peer-reviewed journals.

It concerns us greatly that our healthcare providers and public health in this province are not aware of the most up-to-date scientific research available on ticks and tick-borne diseases. For example, in October 2012, Health Canada announced that their research studies showed current serological testing for Lyme disease has limited reliability and therefore a clinical diagnosis is required. However, two years later, patients in Ontario are still being told they do not have Lyme disease by physicians who have not been trained in tick-borne diseases, who are not aware of the limitations of the ELISA and who are not making the needed clinical diagnosis and treating early. Undetected cases of Lyme disease cause great patient harm. Without sufficient and appropriate antimicrobial treatment in the acute stage, the dissemination of the bacterial infection causes severe patient debilitation in the late-stage and even fatalities. To make matters worse, individuals with late-stage Lyme disease cannot access healthcare or treatment anywhere in this province. Treatment is available out of the country, but very few patients can afford the exorbitant cost of seeking medical care elsewhere, which includes not only travel and accommodation, but also expensive appointments, treatments, and pharmaceuticals. There are many more Lyme patients who simply cannot afford this route and they suffer terribly with no treatment options. Many individuals and families are being bankrupted by the loss of income and some from the expense of seeking out-of-country medical care. Similar to what is happening in New England, there are now whole families suffering from Lyme disease in Ontario. Lyme disease, and other tick-borne related diseases, pose a great threat to our population's health and well-being and we need to take steps to find solutions.

Lyme Ontario commends you for recognizing that Lyme disease is a poorly understood, but very serious healthcare issue, and that steps need to be taken in order to mitigate the spread of this disease. Our organization can greatly contribute to the discussions which will lead to a provincial strategy for Lyme disease and we respectfully ask that Lyme Ontario be offered a seat at the table.

Yours truly,

Ellen Hohns  
President of Lyme Ontario

cc: Mr. Michael Mantha, MPP Algoma-Manitoulin