

March 16, 2010

Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness
8207 Argyll Road
Edmonton, Alberta
T6C 4B2

And

Honourable Pearl Calahasen, Member for Lesser Slave Lake
P.O. Box 598
High Prairie, Alberta
T0G 1E0

And

Honourable Ken Kowalski, Speaker, Legislative Assembly of Alberta
5110 – 50th Avenue
Barrhead, Alberta
T7N 1A4

Dear Honourable Members:

RE: Comments about Public Health Inspectors reported in Hansard, March 11, 2010

The March 11, 2010 sitting of the Alberta Legislature included a discussion of the Public Health Act and the Food Regulation (A.R. 31/2006) regarding the sale of home baked goods. The Hansard for March 11, 2010 detailed Ms. Calahasen's comments describing Public Health Inspectors/Environmental Health Officers (PHIs/EHOs) as "pie police".

Public health legislation sets forth some of the legislated requirements the Government of Alberta requires Albertans adhere to in their daily lives. PHIs/EHOs are entrusted to enforce these regulatory requirements, and this includes provisions under the Food Regulation that Ms. Calahasen was discussing. Referring to these professionals as "pie police" denigrates the important work of these public health and safety professionals. Every PHI/EHO works diligently to ensure that Albertans have access to a safe food supply, as well as access to safe drinking water, safe recreational water, safe rental accommodations, safe air and overall healthy environments in which to live and enjoy.

PHIs/EHOs strive to protect the health of Albertans in all aspects of their lives. From the water they drink in the morning, the daycares they drop their children at, the restaurants where they have lunch, and the seniors' home where they visit grandparents, a PHI/EHO has been involved. Their interventions in health protection help ensure Albertans are safe from illness and harm. Some examples of their important work include:

- ensuring tattoo facilities properly sterilize their needles, preventing the spread of Hepatitis C and HIV
- ensuring apartment buildings have adequate fire safety equipment and fire egress so tenants can escape in the event of a fire
- ensuring proper food handling practices are followed so *E. coli* bacteria do not infect children and cause kidney failure

The work of these Environmental Public Health Professionals may not be well known or well understood, but their work is fundamental to the health and safety of all Albertans. To call them “pie police” is not only derogatory but shows a lack of understanding to the vital role Environmental Public Health Professionals have in reducing the burden on the acute health care system. We feel an apology or retraction is warranted to convey that message to PHIs/EHOs, and to all Albertans, that the Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of PHIs/EHOs to the health care system and the integral role they have in protecting Albertans’ health.

It has been shown that basic public health improvements, including safer food, have been responsible for the significant reductions in communicable disease over the past two centuries. The role of PHI/EHOs in protecting public health continues to be important in preventing communicable disease in Alberta. On behalf of my colleagues, I would be pleased to meet with you and your representatives to further explain the role and responsibilities of PHIs/EHOs and how we work every day to protect the health of Albertans.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to receiving a response. I can be contacted by e-mail at president@ciphi.ab.ca or by phone at (780) 513-7519.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Koreen Anderson".

Koreen Anderson, B.Sc., CPHI(C)
CIPHI Alberta Branch President

