

# NEWS RELEASE

## **ONTARIO CELEBRATES DR. SHEELA BASRUR'S VISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

*Agency for Health Protection and Promotion a result of Dr. Basrur's commitment*

**NEWS**

**October 17, 2008**

Friends, former colleagues, and health care workers will gather today at Convocation Hall, University of Toronto to celebrate the life and contributions of the late Dr. Sheela Basrur.

Best known for her skilful, compassionate and steady leadership through SARS, Dr. Basrur was Toronto's medical officer of health from 1998 to 2004 and Ontario's chief medical officer of health from 2004 to 2006. During that time she initiated major reforms on everything from anti-smoking laws and restaurant food safety to non-essential pesticide use. Dr. Basrur refused to back down on issues she cared about, urged action and strongly advocated for the establishment of the new Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP), which was founded in 2007

Premier Dalton McGuinty, The Honourable Tony Clement, and Mayor David Miller will be at the celebration and will speak to how Sheela Basrur, in her numerous roles, promoted public health awareness and action at all levels of government and to how her efforts continue to influence public health policy today.

Building on Dr. Basrur's legacy, the OAHPP will be a central hub for research, scientific and technical support for those working to protect and support the health of Ontarians, public health units and front-line healthcare workers. The Agency will specialize in the areas of infectious diseases, infection control and prevention, health promotion, chronic disease and injury prevention and environmental health.

Basrur died June 2, 2008, at the age of 51, after a 17-month battle with leiomyosarcoma, a rare form of cancer.

### **QUOTES**

"Sheela's ability to get people to do what was necessary was what differentiated her from the rest; saying no to Dr. Sheela Basrur wasn't something people in public health wanted to do," said Dr. Vivek Goel, President and CEO of OAHPP. "She was a leader who fearlessly gained gratitude, respect and trust from our province and country and I am honoured that I have the opportunity to help carry on her legacy at OAHPP."

### **QUICK FACTS**

- The Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion's board is chaired by Dr. David Walker, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Queen's University.
- Dr. Vivek Goel was named first president and chief executive officer of the Agency, effective July 1, 2008.
- Recently appointed to the OAHPP leadership team are Sonya Corkum, Vice President of Knowledge Exchange and Communications; Dr. Michael Gardam as Director of Infectious Disease Prevention and Control; Dr. Natasha Crowcroft as Director of Surveillance and Epidemiology; and Dr. Heather Manson as Senior Medical Advisor to the President.
- On September 26, 2008, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care announced that the Agency would establish, manage and deploy infection control resource teams to work with the ministry, local public health units and hospitals to provide on-the-ground expertise to

help front-line health care workers deal effectively with C. difficile and other infectious diseases.

- The Agency is working with the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada and infectious disease expert Dr. Allison McGeer to support hospitals in the most effective use of antibiotics.

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