

December 1, 2023

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building, Room 281  
Queens Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Sylvia Jones  
Minister of Health / Deputy Premier  
777 Bay Street, College Park, 5th Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

The Honourable Michael Parsa  
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services  
438 University Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Jones, and Minister Parsa:

**RE: Modernizing Alcohol Marketplace and Product Sales**

On behalf of the Board of Health for North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (Health Unit), please accept this correspondence highlighting our concern about alcohol policy in Ontario and the impact of increased access. At its meeting on November 22, 2023, the Board of Health carried the following resolution #BOH/2023/11/05:

*WHEREAS, Alcohol is a well-established risk factor for death, disease (including certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, liver disease), disability, unintentional injury, risky behaviour, social problems, and violence or aggressive behaviour;*

*WHEREAS, The Health Unit district has significantly higher rates of emergency department visits and hospitalizations due solely to alcohol consumption, compared to Ontario;*

*WHEREAS, The Health Unit district has significantly higher rates of heavy drinking episodes for persons aged 19 years or older compared to Ontario;*

*WHEREAS, Increased availability and affordability of alcohol has a particularly negative impact on school-aged Ontarians, for whom the risk of adverse outcomes from drinking is greater than adults. Alcohol is a leading risk factor for worsening academic performance, injury, violence, suicide, and death in youth;*

*WHEREAS, Within the Health Unit district a majority of high schools (87%) and almost two-thirds of post-secondary institutions (63%) are within a 3km distance of an alcohol retailer;*

*WHEREAS, When alcohol becomes more available and affordable, there is an associated increase in healthcare costs, lost productivity, criminal justice and other direct costs;*

*WHEREAS, The 2019 regulatory changes that have led to the relaxation of alcohol control policies have already placed Ontarians at an increased risk of harms and health related outcomes;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Health endorse the [Letter from the Ontario Public Health Association on Modernizing Alcohol Marketplace and Product Sales](#) to raise awareness about, and work to reduce the impact of increased access to alcohol; and*

*FURTHERMORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Health call on the Province of Ontario to implement the following policy measures:*

- *Reduce retail density*
- *Maintain or decrease hours of sale, with no exceptions*
- *Strengthen Ontario's alcohol pricing policies including taxation, minimum pricing or other means.*
- *Stop further privatization of alcohol sales*
- *Apply a whole of government, health-in-all-policies approach to alcohol modernization.*

The 2019 regulatory changes that have led to the relaxation of alcohol control policies have already placed Ontarians at an increased risk of harms and health related outcomes and may have contributed to alcohol related emergency room and hospital visits in Ontario. Increased availability and affordability of alcohol has a particularly negative impact on school-aged Ontarians, for whom the risk of adverse outcomes from drinking is greater than adults. As alcohol retail density increases, especially near schools, youth are more likely to adopt or maintain high risk drinking behaviours.

The Board of Health respectfully urges the Provincial Government to implement policy measures that reduce access to alcohol and help to prevent negative health outcomes and healthcare costs associated with alcohol use.

Sincerely,



Rick Champagne  
Chairperson, Board of Health





Carol Zimbalatti, M.D., CCFP, MPH  
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer

Copy to:

Vic Fedeli, MPP, Nipissing  
Graydon Smith, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka  
John Vanthof, MPP, Timiskaming-Cochrane  
Ontario Boards of Health  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)  
Health Unit Member Municipalities

References:

1. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2023). (rep.). Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health: Final Report. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from [https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2023-01/CCSA\\_Canadas\\_Guidance\\_on\\_Alcohol\\_and\\_Health\\_Final\\_Report\\_en.pdf](https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2023-01/CCSA_Canadas_Guidance_on_Alcohol_and_Health_Final_Report_en.pdf)
2. Public Health Ontario. (2020). Alcohol use snapshot. Public Health Ontario. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Data-and-Analysis/Substance-Use/Alcohol-Harms>
3. Gohari, M. R., Cook, R. J., Dubin, J. A., & Leatherdale, S. T. (2020). The impact of an alcohol policy change on developmental trajectories of youth alcohol use: Examination of a natural experiment in Canada. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 112(2), 210–218. <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-020-00366-7>
4. Naimi, T., Stockwell, T., Giesbrecht, N., Wetzlauffer, A., Vallance, K., Farrell-Low, A., Farkouh, E., Ma, J., Priore, B., Vishnevsky, N., Price, T., Asbridge, M., Gagnon, M., Hynes, G., Shelley, J., Sherk, A., Shield, K., Solomon, R., Thomas, G. & Thompson, K. (2023). Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation 3.0: Results from Ontario. Victoria, BC: Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, University of Victoria.