

November 19, 2008

Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Bldg
Rm 281
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty,

Re. 2008 alPHa Resolutions on Alcohol

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) I am writing to inform you of recent developments at alPHa regarding alcohol policy in Ontario.

At a special session at the Public Health Summit held in Niagara Falls, Ontario, on October 27, members of alPHa passed a slate of resolutions regarding alcohol policy in the province. The resolutions are enclosed, but in summary, alPHa members voted to petition the Government of Ontario to:

- Create an enhanced public education and promotion campaign on the negative impacts of alcohol misuse as one component of more comprehensive alcohol strategy;
- Continue to restrict the retail sale of alcohol to government-controlled or operated stores;
- Fully consult with health experts including but not limited to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, alPHa and the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) before making any policy changes to the availability of beverage alcohol;
- Enact a 0% Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) limit on drivers until they reach the age of 21 years;
- Reduce the legal blood alcohol concentration from 0.8% to 0.5%; and
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for alcohol and other drugs and include designated driver initiatives as one prevention measure with specific focus on youth.

alPHa also voted to ask the federal government, the Government of Ontario and the Advertising Standards Council to adopt stricter advertising standards for alcohol.

These resolutions will be distributed to local Public Health Units next week for discussion and action by local Boards of Health. I look forward to working collaboratively with you towards improving the record of success in regulating the use of alcohol in Ontario.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Linda Stewart,
Executive Director

Copy: Hon. David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Dr. Helena Jaczek, Parliamentary Assistant, Ministry of Health Promotion
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Acting)
Allison Stuart, Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting)
Prof. Jurgen Rehm, Chair in Addiction Policy, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Andrew Murie, CEO, MADD Canada
Jean Major, CEO and Registrar, Alcohol and Gaming Commission

Enclosures

ALPHA RESOLUTION A08-2

TITLE: Establish Stricter Advertising Standards for Alcohol

SPONSOR: Middlesex-London Board of Health

WHEREAS Exposure to repeated high level alcohol promotion inculcates pro-drinking attitudes and increases the likelihood of heavier drinking; and

WHEREAS Alcohol advertising predisposes minors to drinking well before the legal age of purchase; and

WHEREAS Marketing strategies such as alcohol sports sponsorships embed images and messages about alcohol into young people's everyday lives; and

WHEREAS Advertising has been found to promote and reinforce perceptions of drinking as positive, glamorous, and relatively risk free; and

WHEREAS Deficiencies in the current system to control alcohol advertising pose a public health and safety threat particularly to underage audiences;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Local Public Health Agencies petition the federal government, Ontario government, and Advertising Standards Council to establish stricter advertising standards for alcohol.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: R. Kyle (Durham)

Seconded: G. Barton (Eastern Ontario)

Resolution CARRIED AS AMENDED

ALPHA RESOLUTION A08-3

TITLE: Advocacy for an Enhanced Provincial Public Education and Promotion Campaign on the Negative Health Impacts of Alcohol Misuse

SPONSOR: Middlesex-London Board of Health

WHEREAS The Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines under the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act state that Boards of health shall engage in knowledge exchange activities with public health practitioners, policy-makers, community partners, health care providers, and the public regarding factors that determine the health of the population and support effective public health practice gained through population health assessment, surveillance, research, and program evaluation; and

WHEREAS Public health units/departments have a direct mandate in several key areas related to the use of alcohol and other drugs, specifically: chronic disease prevention, injury prevention, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder prevention, substance misuse prevention and harm reduction; and

WHEREAS Globally, alcohol is estimated to contribute to 7% of all Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYS) for cancers; 38% of neuro-psychiatric conditions; 7% of cardiovascular diseases, 8% of other non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes and liver cirrhosis), 28% of unintentional injuries (drunk driving crashes, falls, fires, etc.); and 12% of intentional injuries (e.g. suicide, homicide, sexual assault, other violence). (DALYS is a method for measuring the disability, disease or death impact on a population from a risk factor.); and

WHEREAS In 1992, alcohol cost the Canadian economy approximately \$7.5 billion (\$2.8 billion in Ontario), and illicit drugs an additional \$1.4 billion;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Local Public Health Agencies petition the Ontario government to create an enhanced public education and promotion campaign on the negative health impacts of alcohol misuse as one component of a comprehensive strategy.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: V. Sterling (Toronto)
Seconded: M. Johnson (Eastern Ontario)

Resolution CARRIED AS AMENDED



ALPHA RESOLUTION A08-4.1

Note: This resolution is a re-introduction of a previously defeated resolution (i.e. A08-4) of the same title with the provision of new wording in the operative clause (i.e. the 'Now therefore be it resolved' clause).

TITLE: Eliminate The Availability Of Alcohol Except In Liquor Control Board Outlets (LCBO) (i.e. Increase Point Of Sale Control)

SPONSOR: Middlesex-London Board of Health

WHEREAS There is a well-established association between easy access to alcohol and overall rates of consumption and damage from alcohol; and

WHEREAS 73% of Ontarians disagree with the privatization of alcohol retail sales; and

WHEREAS 77% of Ontario adults want beer and liquor store hours to stay the same; 77% want hours of sale in bars to stay the same; and 94% support government involvement in the prevention of alcohol-related problems. (Anglin et al., 2004);

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) petition the Ontario government to maintain its monopoly on off-premise liquor sales through the Liquor Control Board of Ontario;

AND FURTHER THAT alPHa petition the Ontario government to retain oversight of beverage alcohol at Ontario wineries, microbreweries and the Beer Store through the provisions of the Liquor License Act;

AND FURTHER THAT alPHa petition the Ontario Government to fully consult with health experts, including but not limited to alPHa, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Ontario Public Health Association before making any policy changes to the availability of beverage alcohol.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: R. Pellizzari (Peterborough)

Seconded: M. Harding (Thunder Bay)

Resolution CARRIED

ALPHA RESOLUTION A08-5

TITLE: **Advocacy for Enactment of a 0% Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) Limit on Drivers Until They Reach the Age Of 21 Years**

SPONSOR: **Middlesex-London Board of Health**

WHEREAS There is strong evidence, primarily from the United States, that a higher minimum drinking age significantly reduces alcohol consumption and related motor vehicle collisions among both the 19 to 21 year age group as well as younger teenagers; and

WHEREAS Public health units/departments have a direct mandate in several key areas related to the use of alcohol and other drugs; and

WHEREAS A comprehensive review of 241 studies published between 1960 and 1999 found that the minimum drinking age of 21 years of age has been the most successful strategy to reduce teenage drinking as well as reduce youth traffic crashes; and

WHEREAS MADD Canada is of the view that, to reduce youth traffic crashes, the drinking age should be either 21 years of age or at a minimum 19 years of age while enacting a 0% Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit on drivers until they reach the age of 21 years;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Local Public Health Agencies petition the Ontario government to enact a 0% Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit on drivers until they reach the age of 21 years.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: D. McKeown (Toronto)
Seconded: R. Pellizzari (Peterborough)

Resolution CARRIED AS AMENDED

ALPHA RESOLUTION A08-6

TITLE: Advocacy to Reduce the Legal Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) from 0.08% to 0.05%

SPONSOR: Middlesex-London Board of Health

WHEREAS In 1970 Parliament established the 0.08% blood alcohol concentration (BAC) threshold based on studies that underestimated the relative risks of fatal crashes at lower BAC levels; and

WHEREAS Impaired driving remains Canada's single largest criminal cause of death, claiming more than twice as many lives per year as all types of homicide combined; and

WHEREAS Laboratory driving simulator and closed-access roadway studies over the last 50 years have established that even small amounts of alcohol adversely affect driving skills and performance; and

WHEREAS Leading medical, injury prevention, and traffic safety organizations around the world support a BAC driving limit at or below 0.05%. These include: the World, American, British, and Canadian Medical Associations, the World Health Organization; the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine; the International Transportation Safety Association; the European Transport Safety Council; the Royal Society for Prevention of accidents; the Australian transport Safety Bureau; the Canadian Public Health Association; and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; and

WHEREAS Public support for a lower Criminal Code limit continues to increase across gender, age and geographical regions of Canada; and

WHEREAS The proposed 0.05% law is designed to maximize the deterrent impact of the law, minimize the administrative burden on the criminal justice system, and appropriately sanction offenders;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Local Public Health Agencies petition the Ontario government to reduce the legal BAC from 0.08% to 0.05%.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: D. McKeown (Toronto)

Seconded: R. Kyle (Durham)

Resolution CARRIED

ALPHA RESOLUTION A08-7

TITLE: Promoting Safe Driving in Young Drivers

SPONSOR: Toronto Board of Health

WHEREAS An effective and comprehensive strategy for alcohol and other drugs must include promotion of specific protective behaviours for the public to adopt; and

WHEREAS "Designated driver" is a strategy that can contribute to prevention of injury and appears to have support by the public;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Local Public Health Agencies request the province that in the development of a comprehensive strategy for alcohol and other drugs, they include designated driver initiatives as one prevention measure with specific focus on youth.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: C. Bryson (Thunder Bay)

Seconded: B. Pater (KFL&A)

Resolution CARRIED