

February 18, 2009

Mr. Trevor Day  
Clerk, Standing Committee on General Government  
Room 1405, Whitney Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Dear Mr. Day,

**Re. Bill 126, Road Safety Act – Submission to the Standing Committee on General Government**

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 provide our comments on changes to the Highway Traffic Act as proposed in Bill 126, Road Safety Act 2008.

In October of 2008, alPHa passed three resolutions that relate directly to the intent of this legislation and we urge the Committee to take them into consideration as the Ontario government strengthens its approach to preventable road-related death and injury.

**A08-5 - Reducing BAC for drivers under the age of 21**

Given the strong statistical relationship between the age and experience of drivers and traffic injuries and fatalities, alPHa strongly supports the amendment that would require a 0.0 mg/L Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) for drivers up to the age of 21, enhancing the existing similar requirement for drivers that have not yet reached the final stage of Ontario's graduated licensing system.

**A08-6 - Reducing legal BAC from 0.08 to 0.05 mg/L**

There is a strong body of evidence that suggests that the current legal limit of 0.08 mg/L BAC underestimates the effects of alcohol on driving performance. Alcohol-related traffic deaths and injuries are preventable, but remain considerable in Canada. We believe that their burden on the health and criminal justice systems will be further reduced by lowering the allowable BAC to 0.05 mg/L for all fully-licensed drivers over the age of 21.

**A08-7 - Promoting Safe Driving in Young Drivers**

Legislative changes such as these are insufficient on their own. They require strong ancillary supports to ensure that Ontarians adopt the behaviours required to reduce preventable traffic deaths and injuries. Strong promotional campaigns have been very effective mechanisms for such behavioural changes in the past, and we recommend that the passage of this legislation be accompanied by a robust provincial campaign to promote safe driving, with particular emphasis on "designated driver" initiatives.

Thank you for receiving these positions for consideration by the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Stewart,  
Executive Director

**Copy:** Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Acting)  
Hon. James Bradley, Minister of Transportation  
Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association  
Chairs, Ontario Boards of Health  
Medical Officers of Health

Encl.

## 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**