

May 31, 2010



The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier
Legislative Building, Room 281
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

Re: Semi-Privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO)

Grey Bruce has an alcohol problem. A local health survey shows that in 2002, 64% of drinkers were low-risk drinkers; by 2008, that number had fallen to below 60%. About 40% of residents in Grey Bruce are consistently over-using alcohol.

Injury and fatality rates from motor vehicle collision in Grey Bruce are higher than provincial average. Local self-reported rates for drinking and driving are 3.9 % and for recreational vehicles 7.8%. High alcohol use is also linked with injuries during leisure activities and with falls in the elderly. The injury rate in Grey Bruce is 40.4 per 100,000; almost double the provincial rate 22.3 per 100,000.

As a primarily rural community, with bus service in only one urban centre, increasing outlets in small communities may also contribute to impaired driving as supported by findings in the Public Health Approach to Alcohol Policy: An updated report from the Provincial Health Office (British Columbia), December 2008, where growth in licensed private retail, rural agency, and "Other liquor stores, "several indicators suggest that the prevalence of alcohol-impaired driving may have increased since 2000".

Education is but one public health strategy in changing behavior, but "Alcohol is no ordinary commodity" and as such marketing limitations specifically availability restrictions including access, price, and limiting outlets are essential to supporting a change the culture of drinking and reducing health related harms in Grey and Bruce.

On May 21, 2010, at a regular Board of Health meeting for Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Board considered the attached letter from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit dated April 21, 2010 regarding privatization of alcohol sales. The following resolution was passed:

Resolution 2010-46

***THAT*, the Grey Bruce Board of Health endorse the letter dated April 21, 2010 from Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit regarding the semi-privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and**

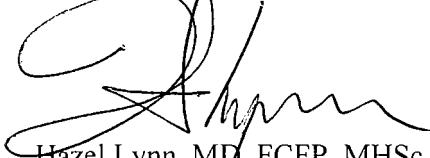
***THAT*, copies be forwarded to the Minister of Finance, Minister of Health Promotion, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, all local Members of Parliament and local Members of Provincial Parliament, and all Ontario Boards of Health.**

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Building Healthy Communities Together,



Hazel Lynn, MD, FCFP, MHSc
Medical Officer of Health

HL/em

Copies to:

Larry J. Miller, MP Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound
Ben Lobb, MP Huron-Bruce
Helena Guergis, MP Simcoe-Grey
Bill Murdoch, MPP Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound
Carol Mitchell, MPP Huron-Bruce
Jim Wilson, MPP Simcoe-Grey
Ontario Boards of Health
Ontario Medical Officers of Health

Encl.

April 21, 2010

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

Dear Premier McGuinty:

It has come to our attention that the Ontario government is exploring options that could result in the semi-privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO). According to information circulating in print media, there is an option within the coming 'Open Ontario' five-year strategy to consolidate publicly held corporations [LCBO, Hydro One, Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, and others] and assets and combine them into a larger entity of which minority shares would be made available to private investors..

There is a clear body of scientific evidence correlating privatization of alcohol sales and increased accessibility of alcohol and alcohol-related harms. These social harms such as chronic disease, crime, injury and addiction come at great cost to the citizens of Ontario and its government. Over time, these costs will surpass any short term gains in cost-management or job creation sought by the privatization initiative.

In fact, data collected following privatization in the province of Alberta and semi-privatization in British Columbia have shown marked expansion in alcohol availability and a significant spike in alcohol consumption and related harms as a direct result.^{1,2}

As such, it is imperative that your government reconsider the potential private sale of a share of the LCBO, even merely as part of an amalgam of public corporations. To proceed would be a decision which undermines public health and safety, while concurrently creating untenable future costs including health-care costs.

Finance Minister Dwight Duncan was quoted in the *Toronto Star* on March 6, 2010, as indicating this semi-privatization plan is in "the long-term interests of all Ontarians". Given the potential health impacts resulting from a decision to include the LCBO as part of this semi-privatization, the government's plan must be rethought as it is actually contrary to the long-term interests of Ontarians to take this step.

I look forward to hearing of your intentions on this issue.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dennis Roughley
Chair, Board of Health
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

DR:JF:mk

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c: Dwight Duncan Minister of Finance
Margarett Best Minister of Health Promotion
Deborah Matthews Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Julia Munroe MPP York Simcoe
Garfield Dunlop MPP Simcoe North
Aileen Carroll MPP Barrie
Norm Miller, MPP Parry Sound-Muskoka
Jim Wilson MPP Simcoe Grey
All Ontario Boards of Health
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, ALPHA

¹ CAMH Position Paper: Retail Alcohol Monopolies and Regulation: Preserving the Public Interest, January 2004. accessed at http://www.camh.net/Public_policy/Public_policy_papers/retail_alcohol_monopolies.html on April 6, 2010.

² Kendall, P. R. W. (2008) Public Health Approach to Alcohol Policy – An Update Report from the Provincial Health Officer. BC: Office of the Provincial Health Officer.