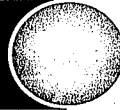


Southwest / Central West Ontario
Substance Misuse Prevention Network



c/o Middlesex-London Health Unit 50 King St., London ON N6A 5L7 519.663.5317 ext. 2252

Tuesday, May 11, 2010

RECEIVED

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The Honourable Dwight Duncan
Minister of Finance and Chair of Management Board of Cabinet
7 Queen's Park Crescent, 7th floor
Toronto, ON, M7A 1Y7

Dear Honourable Dwight Duncan:

On behalf of the Southwest/Central West Ontario Substance Misuse Prevention Network (SMPN), I am writing this letter to affirm our position against any form of privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO). This action is in response to recent media coverage on the possible sale of Ontario government assets.

The Southwest/Central West SMPN is comprised of 17 of the 36 Ontario health units. Our purpose is to foster communication, collaboration, awareness, policy development and continuing education about substance misuse prevention among public health professionals in the southwest and central west regions of Ontario. Collectively, we advocate to prevent and to reduce the harms associated with substance misuse.

Under a privatized and / or semi-privatized alcohol delivery system, there are strong incentives to deregulate alcohol controls and focus on the business side of alcohol sales at the expense of public health and safety considerations¹. In addition, under NAFTA rules, once privatized, it would almost be impossible to reverse.

Alcohol is an addictive drug, and its misuse generates enormous health and social costs for Ontario. Alcohol is the third leading contributor to the burden of disease in developed countries like Canada. It accounts for nearly as much damage as tobacco and high blood pressure².

Public control over alcohol sales and distribution is one of the most effective and important tools available to curb the deaths, injuries, illness and social costs that result from alcohol misuse³.

Ontario has considered privatization of the LCBO in the past. The report - **Strategy for Transforming Ontario's Beverage Alcohol System** (2005) - produced by The Beverage Alcohol System Review Panel for Ontario's Ministry of Finance, concluded that privatization of the LCBO would likely increase alcohol consumption in Ontario by at least 10%, and that the 10% increase in alcohol consumption would act to increase alcohol's mortality burden, or deaths resulting from alcohol by 13%⁴.

There is new evidence supporting the value of a public monopoly on alcohol. A 2008 national study estimated that the privatization of alcohol sales in Canadian provinces would increase the burden due to alcohol by 8%-12%. Additionally, privatization would increase alcohol-related

Cont'd p.2

¹ CAMH. (2005) Retail Alcohol Monopolies: Privatisation, Deregulation and Alcohol Consumption

² World Health Organization. (2009). Global health risks: mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks. Geneva: WHO

³ Babor et al. 2003. *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity: Research and Public Policy*. Oxford Press. WHO.

⁴ This document is available at <<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/consultations/basr/camh.html>>

costs by 6%-12%⁵. Further, a recent study of the effects of privatization of alcohol sales in Alberta concluded that privatization was associated with increases in suicide mortality rates in the province of up to 52%⁶.

Previous Ontario governments have carefully reviewed the evidence on the positive and negative aspects of the LCBO privatization proposals, including the likely impact on health and social problems. Those governments decided it was in the best interests of Ontarians to maintain public control over alcohol sales through the LCBO.

Based on strengthened evidence in favour of public control versus privatized alcohol distribution and sales, we urge your government to retain the LCBO and to acknowledge that alcohol is no ordinary commodity.

We look forward to receiving your positive response in regards to this specific issue and would welcome a meeting with Ministry staff to discuss the above contents in greater detail.

Sincerely,



Melissa Rennison
Acting Chair of Southwest/Central West Ontario Substance Misuse Prevention Network

Partnering Health Units that support this letter:

Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit 435 Grand Ave. W. Chatham ON
City of Hamilton Public Health Services 1447 Upper Ottawa St. Hamilton ON
County of Lambton Community Health Services Department 160 Exmouth St. Point Edward ON
Elgin St. Thomas Public Health 99 Edward St. St. Thomas ON
Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit 12 Gilbertson Dr. Simcoe ON
Halton Region Health Department 1151 Bronte Rd. Oakville ON
Huron County Health Unit 77722B London Rd. R.R # 5 Clinton ON
Middlesex-London Health Unit 50 King St. London ON
Oxford County Public Health 410 Buller St. Woodstock ON
Perth District Health Unit 653 West Gore St. Stratford ON
Region of Waterloo Public Health 99 Regina St. S. Waterloo ON

c.c. Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion of Ontario
Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care of Ontario
Tim Hudak, Leader, Official Opposition, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario
Andrea Horwath, Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario
Ms. Liz Haugh, President of the Ontario Public Health Association
Ms. Valerie Sterling, President of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Mr. Barney Savage, Director of Public Policy, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Mr. Andy Murie, CEO of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Canada
Mr. Patrick Ford, Policy Director, Liquor Control Board of Ontario

⁵ Rehm, J., Gnam, W.H., Popova, S., Patra, J. and Sarnocinska-Hart, 2008. Avoidable Cost of Alcohol Abuse in Canada, 2002. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health., Toronto

⁶ Flam Zalcman, R. and Mann, R.E. The effects of privatization of alcohol sales in Alberta on suicide mortality rates. Contemporary Drug Problems, 2007 (2008), 34, 589-609.