

November 10, 2008

Hon. Margaret Best
Minister of Health Promotion
777 Bay Street, 18th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1S5

Dear Minister Best:

RE: Greater Kingston Area Safe and Sober Community Alliance Funding

The Board of Health for Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington, at its meeting of October 15, 2008, passed the following resolution:

THAT the KFL&A Board of Health write to the Minister of Health Promotion, the Hon. Margaret Best, to advocate for ongoing and enhanced FOCUS funding to the Greater Kingston Area Safe and Sober Community Alliance, with funding confirmation provided as soon as possible to ensure time for optimal programme planning.

The community-based *Greater Kingston Area Safe and Sober Alliance (Alliance)* has been funded by provincial *FOCUS* funding since 1998. The *Alliance* has broad-based representation from enforcement, education, health and not-for-profit sectors; these partners have sought to prevent and reduce alcohol and drug-related injury and disease by raising awareness, supporting enforcement and bringing about community change through advocacy. Strategies have included media campaigns, seminars with parents and teens, community events, alcohol policy review and development, and enforcement measures such as the Enhanced R.I.D.E. This programme falls within the provincial Mandatory Health Programmes and Services Guidelines and remains consistent with the 2008 Ontario Public Health Standards.

Over the past number of years, working in collaboration with the *Alliance*, the KFL&A Board of Health has advocated for many changes in provincial policies and legislation related to alcohol use and driving safety, including more stringent legislation on blood alcohol concentration levels and advocacy against privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. Most recently, the KFL&A Board of Health, with support from the *Alliance*, voted to support several resolutions of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies. These resolutions called for the following: an enhanced provincial public education campaign on the negative health impacts of alcohol misuse, stricter advertising standards for alcohol, elimination of alcohol sales except in Liquor Control Board Outlets, and enactment of a 0% Blood Alcohol Concentration limit on drivers under 21.

KINGSTON, FRONTENAC AND LENNOX & ADDINGTON PUBLIC HEALTH

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The *Alliance's* current *FOCUS* funding will conclude March 31, 2009, and despite many inquiries, we have not yet had confirmation from the Ministry of Health Promotion that there will be ongoing funding for *FOCUS* projects after that date. Needless to say, *FOCUS* funding must continue past March 2009 for KFL&A Public Health and its many partners to continue the level and quality of work that has taken place under the mandate of the *Alliance*. Many strong partnerships have been established within the Alliance; however, without funding, injury prevention programming will be greatly diminished, thus having a negative impact on the progress that has been made.

In addition, the \$118,000 in funding that has been received annually since 1998, with no increase of any amount during the past, clearly has become insufficient to sustain the level of programming required, given the increase in personnel and programming costs. If one considers the level of programming that has been maintained and achieved despite these constraints, it is easy to see that a great deal of collaboration and creativity goes into the delivery of high quality and far-reaching programs on a very limited budget. In fact, the in-kind contribution from KFL&A Public Health and its partners for this project in 2007-2008 stood at \$239,562 (\$163,054 and \$76,508 respectively), indicating the strong commitment to the project over and above the funded components. For this program to be sustained and to continue to grow, ongoing provincial funding must be secured and increased beyond the current amount.

In conclusion, the KFL&A Board of Health is extremely proud to be a partner in the *Greater Kingston Area Safe & Sober Community Alliance*. We strongly encourage the government of Ontario to continue to support the provincial *FOCUS* Community Program, by providing ongoing and increased financial support beyond March 2009, thus allowing this dynamic programme to continue to make a difference in our community.

Yours truly,



Beth Pater, Chair
KFL&A Board of Health

Copy to: Board of Health members
Hon. John Gerretsen, MPP, Kingston and the Islands
Hon. Randy Hillier, MPP, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington
Ms. Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Gurpreet Clair, FOCUS Programme Coordinator, Ministry of Health Promotion
Pam Benson, Manager, FOCUS Resource Centre