

700 Lawrence Ave. W., Suite 310
Toronto, Ontario M6A 3B4

Tel: (416) 367-3313
1-800-267-6817 (Ont)
Fax: (416) 367-2844
E-mail: info@opha.on.ca
www.opha.on.ca

Honorary Patron

The Hon. David C. Onley
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

President

Elizabeth Haugh
E-mail: lhaugh@wechealthunit.org

Executive Director

Connie Uetrecht
E-mail: cuetrecht@opha.on.ca

Constituent Societies

ANDSOOHA – Public Health Nursing
Management in Ontario

Association of Ontario
Health Centres

Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario

Association of Supervisors of Public Health
Inspectors of Ontario

Canadian Institute of Public Health
Inspectors (Ontario Branch)

Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group
(RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario

Ontario Association of Public Health
Dentistry

Ontario Public Health Libraries Association

Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in
Public Health

Public Health Research, Education and
Development (PHRED) Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

January 29th, 2010

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 Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), I am writing to reaffirm 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 selling of Ontario government assets.

OPHA, a not-for-profit organization formed in 1949, provides an independent voice for citizens committed to improving the health of all Ontarians. Its mission is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout the province. The OPHA Alcohol Workgroup advocates specifically for policies to reduce harm caused by alcohol consumption, the prevalence and gravity of which are similar to those caused by tobacco.

As stated in our letter to Members of Provincial Parliament in December 2004, privatizing the LCBO would jeopardize public health, squander scarce public resources and, under NAFTA rules, be practically irreversible. 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, accounting for nearly as much damage as tobacco and high blood pressure¹.

¹ World Health Organization. (2009). Global health risks: mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks. Geneva: WHO

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 misuse¹.

Ontario has considered privatization of the LCBO in the past. A report commissioned by Ontario's Ministry of Finance for the Beverage Alcohol System Review in 2005 concluded that privatization of the LCBO would likely increase alcohol consumption in Ontario by at least 10%, and that this 10% increase in alcohol consumption would act to increase alcohol's mortality burden, or deaths resulting from alcohol, by 13%².

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 costs by 6-12%³. 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%⁴.

Previous Ontario governments have carefully reviewed the evidence on the positive and negative aspects of the LCBO privatization proposals, including their likely impact on health and social problems, and have decided that it was in the best interests of Ontarians to maintain public control over alcohol sales through the LCBO. The evidence in favour of public control over alcohol distribution and sales has strengthened in recent years. We therefore urge your government to retain the LCBO and to acknowledge that alcohol is no ordinary commodity.

We look forward to receiving your positive response.

Sincerely,



Liz Haugh
President

c.c. Honourable Dalton McGuinty
 Minister Margaret Best
 Minister Deb Matthews

¹ Babor et al. 2003. *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity: Research and Public Policy*. Oxford Press. WHO.

² This document is available at <<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/consultations/basr/camh.html>>

³ 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

⁴ 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.