



# Alcohol Policy Review: Opportunities for Ontario Municipalities

**PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS CAN WORK WITH MUNICIPALITIES TO REDUCE HARMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.**



Public health units in Ontario are mandated to address the health burden of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harms using a comprehensive health promotion approach. Partnerships, particularly those involving municipal governments, are vital in advancing healthy

public policy. These recommendations present opportunities for collaboration between local public health units, Ontario municipalities and other community partners to mitigate alcohol risk and harm through policy development.



## **LOCAL POLICIES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF REDUCING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARMS.**

In the last ten years, effective policy interventions to reduce alcohol harms at the local level have been described in the literature, highlighting the need for public health and local governments to work together to advance policy development.

There are numerous resources supporting Municipal Alcohol Policy (MAP) development, a long-standing policy approach

that manages alcohol risk and harm on municipally-owned properties. However, resources to support municipal policy options outside of traditional MAPs have not previously existed. This policy review fills that gap by examining policy options outside of traditional MAPs to help municipalities manage alcohol off municipally owned property.

## **THIS REVIEW FOCUSES ON POLICIES FOR ALCOHOL CONTROL OFF MUNICIPAL PROPERTY.**

A policy review was initiated in 2016 by three health units and conducted by Liem Strategic Integration (LSI). LSI reviewed alcohol guidance documents, legislation relating to municipalities and alcohol, and existing policies and practices in the Canadian and international context. LSI also conducted interviews with the Alcohol and

Gaming Commission of Ontario and with municipalities that had implemented policies to learn from their experiences. This review identifies local alcohol policy options external to MAPs and assesses their feasibility in the context of Ontario's legislative environment.

## **THIS REVIEW FEATURES REAL WORLD EXAMPLES OF MUNICIPAL POLICIES.**

- City of Vaughn – business license by-law
- City of Hamilton – liquor license application review process
- City of Surrey – minimum separation distances
- City of Barrie – zoning by-law
- City of Vancouver – liquor license policy
- Town of Ajax – outdoor patio by-law



**Effective policy interventions to reduce alcohol harms at the local level are within reach. The findings and recommendations offered here will support public health practitioners to work with municipal leaders to develop policies for healthier communities.**

PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS CAN:

- Report potential liquor license infractions to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and local law enforcement officials when observed/ documented during routine inspections at licensed premises.
- Where applicable, participate in a task force with the local municipality and local law enforcement officials.

Licensing and Enforcement

- Advocate for provincial policies that allow local jurisdictions the authority to block a license for a bar or alcohol outlets, especially in areas where there is a higher degree of crime or higher socioeconomic disparity.
- Advocate for provincial policies to develop a separation distance between alcohol retailers, including grocery stores serving alcohol.
- Advocate for provincial policies that encourage municipalities to establish restrictions to control alcohol retail density during a statutory review of provincial land use planning policies.
- Participate in municipal strategic plans such as Tourism Plans, Arts and Culture Plans, Economic Development Plans, and Municipal Retail Market studies to provide feedback on municipal actions that affect retail services, business development, tourism, and culture.
- Work with municipalities to identify priority neighbourhoods to limit alcohol retailers and licensed establishments.
- Develop mapping to monitor the location of alcohol retail outlets and licensed establishments.

Regulating Physical Access through Density and Location Restrictions

- Provide best practices research and supporting evidence to municipalities, when warranted, regarding risks and alcohol harms associated with hours of sale.

Hours of Sale Limitations

- Continue to advocate for stronger alcohol pricing interventions to reduce alcohol-related harms.

Pricing Strategies

- Continue to advocate for stronger policies to restrict alcohol marketing and advertising.

Marketing

- Share the findings of the policy review with municipalities and encourage them to adopt a policy approach to reducing alcohol risk and harm.
- Advocate for changes to access alcohol sales data from licensed establishments to support policy development.

Surveillance and Information Sharing



“Policy controls strive to achieve a balance between business and economic interests, as well as the health and safety of the population.”

– Ontario Public

Health Association



“Municipal alcohol policies are not about prohibition...they’re about promoting and supporting safe and viable communities with fewer drinking harms.”

– *Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities*



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*For the full report visit:*

<http://opha.on.ca/Events/Alcohol-policy-review-opportunities-for-Ontario-mu.aspx>