

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

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The Hon. David C. Onley
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

President

Carol Timmings
E-mail: ctimmings@opha.on.ca

Executive Director

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

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August 15, 2005

Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Queen's Park
Toronto ON

Dear Premier McGuinty,

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) supports the development of a provincial injury prevention strategy. As the voice of public health professionals in Ontario, the OPHA's role is to provide leadership on issues affecting the health of the public. Because the impact of injuries on both the lives of Canadians and health care costs have largely been underestimated or ignored by both citizens and governments, it is our view that provincial attention and co-ordination through the power of a co-ordinated strategy, are essential for progress on this issue. The synergy created by a multi-sectoral and comprehensive injury prevention strategy for Ontario could address the associated costs and suffering.

The need for a strategy has never been more important. Injuries are the leading cause of death for Canadians between the ages of one and forty-four, and the fourth leading cause of death overall for Canadians of all ages. The hospital and rehabilitation costs resulting from injuries are responsible for a huge economic burden on the economy. The direct and indirect financial costs of injury have been estimated to be 12.7 billion dollars per year at the national level.

As a coalition of community health promotion professionals, we would like to affirm the importance of including both *unintentional* (falls, drownings, burns, vehicle crashes, etc.) and *intentional* (suicide, assault, family violence, etc.) injuries as part of a provincial strategy. In addition, alcohol must be included as a key factor, because the major burden of morbidity and mortality related to alcohol use is from a variety of injuries. Injuries, regardless of the type or motivation, place a significant emotional and financial burden on survivors, victims and the treatment system. The need for prevention is clear.

Your government has frequently expressed its commitment to

reducing hospital wait times and to improving the health of all Ontarians. These commitments could be partially realized by reducing injuries in Ontario through a co-ordinated injury prevention strategy that includes all stakeholders.

OPHA members are engaged in efforts to prevent unintentional and intentional injury and we feel very strongly that the engagement of stakeholders under the umbrella of a provincial strategy would enable Ontario to make strides in alleviating the financial and emotional costs associated with injuries in this province.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Garry Aslanyan
President, Ontario Public Health Association

cc. Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-term Care
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Health
Hon. Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. Harinder Takhar, Minister of Transportation