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The Hon. James K. Bartleman,
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Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

February 19, 2009

Mr. Trevor Day
Standing Committee on General Government
Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Room 1405, Whitney Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2

Dear Mr. Day,

On behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), I am writing to express our support for the Ontario Government's proposed initiative to require a zero Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) for all drivers until they reach 22 years of age.

Alcohol-impaired driving is the leading contributor to death and serious injury for young people aged 16-21. Alcohol problems affect other age groups as well. For example, in 2002 (the latest date available), alcohol accounted for an estimated \$5.3 billion in lost labour productivity and avoidable health care, legal and policing services. These costs far exceed the annual revenue from alcohol sales.

There is considerable and credible research evidence that introducing a requirement that all drivers must maintain a 0 BAC to 21 would likely lead to reduced collisions, injuries and fatalities resulting from alcohol-impaired driving. In the United States, all states now require that drivers maintain a 0 BAC to age 21. Several Australian states have this requirement, and several Canadian provinces have introduced or are planning to introduce this or similar requirements.

The scientific evidence strongly supports the introduction of this measure. High-quality research indicates that a reduction of as much as 24% in deaths and injuries among drivers aged 16 to 21 can be expected, and thus provides very consistent and clear support for implementing a 0 BAC to age 21 requirement as a means to prevent needless drinking-driving fatalities among young people. It is also important to separate drinking from driving for as long as possible with young drivers. Since the rates of alcohol-related crashes decrease significantly after the age of 25, extending the BAC restriction to at least the age of 21 (particularly in Ontario with a legal drinking age of 19) will likely help to instil the practice of driving sober as young drivers enter into adulthood. *The Ontario Public Health Association therefore strongly supports Bill 126, which will require all drivers in Ontario up to the age of 21 to have a 0 BAC when driving.*

While this specific initiative addresses impaired driving among the young, we would also like to take this opportunity to remind the government of its broader responsibility in controlling alcohol problems through healthy public policy with regards to alcohol. The OPHA would be pleased to meet with members of your government to discuss in detail such measures, such as maintaining a public monopoly on alcohol distribution.

In conclusion, we strongly support the Government of Ontario's initiative to introduce a 0 BAC requirement for all drivers until they reach 22 years of age, on the grounds that it will significantly reduce deaths and injuries among young people in this province. We also encourage the government to continue to recognize its central responsibility in controlling alcohol-related death and injury through evidence-based policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carol Timmings". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative flourish at the end.

Carol Timmings
President