



2 Carlton Street, Suite 1306
Toronto ON M5B 1J3
Tel: (416) 595-0006
Fax: (416) 595-0030
E-mail: info@alphaweb.org

Providing leadership in public health management

Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Bldg
Room 281
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

August 17, 2011

Dear Premier McGuinty

Re. 2011 alPHa Resolutions

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) I am writing to introduce two alPHa Resolutions that were passed at our June 2011 Annual General Meeting for anticipated response and action by the Government of Ontario.

Resolution A11-1 - Conduct a Formal Review and Impact Analysis of the Health and Economic Effects of Alcohol in Ontario and Thereafter Develop a Provincial Alcohol Strategy

As you are aware, a number of health organizations – including many of alPHa’s members – expressed significant concerns about the recent decision to relax some of the limitations on the availability of alcohol under the Liquor License Act. It is disappointing that this decision was made without full consideration of its health impacts, as it is well established that increased access leads to increased consumption, which increases the associated health and societal costs to the Province. We are therefore strongly urging the Government of Ontario to conduct a formal review and impact analysis of the health and economic effects of alcohol in Ontario and develop a provincial Alcohol Strategy.

Resolution A11-4 - Promoting Public Health in Ontario

The term “public health”, as it pertains to health protection, disease prevention and management, and health promotion, is not well understood by members of the public, potential partners, and policy-makers. It is nonetheless a key contributor to keeping Ontarians healthy, and we believe that a higher public profile can only strengthen the effectiveness of its contributions. We are therefore asking the Province to fund a single, centralized provincial public relations campaign to increase the profile of the public health system and what it does to address public health issues for Ontario residents.

Resolution A11-8 - Public Health Supporting Early Learning and Care

alPHa strongly believes that supporting families and healthy early childhood development is a core part of the mandate of public health, as high quality investments in early childhood yield significant societal returns, not the least of which is improvement of health outcomes through addressing their determinants. We have made our support for the approaches and recommendations outlined in Dr. Charles Pascal's report, "*With our Best Future in Mind*" very clear since its release, and we are committed to playing an important role in realizing them. alPHa will therefore continue its advocacy to strengthen public health programs that support families and healthy early childhood development, beginning with a call on each of Ontario's political parties to pledge a strong commitment to early learning and care during the 2011 provincial election campaign.

We look forward to working with the Government of Ontario to resolve these issues, which will contribute to the improvement of health and wellbeing for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Linda Stewart,
Executive Director

Copy: Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Hon. Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion
Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services (#A11-4, #A11-8)
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education (#A11-8)
Dr. Charles Pascal, Advisor to the Premier on Early Learning (#A11-8)

Encl.

TITLE: Conduct a Formal Review and Impact Analysis of the Health and Economic Effects of Alcohol in Ontario and Thereafter Develop a Provincial Alcohol Strategy

SPONSOR: Middlesex-London Board of Health

WHEREAS There is a well-established association between easy access to alcohol and overall rates of consumption and damage from alcohol; and (Barbor et al., 2010)

WHEREAS Ontario has a significant portion of the population drinking alcohol (81.5%), exceeding the low risk drinking guidelines (23.4%), consuming 5 or more drinks on a single occasion weekly (11.2%), and reporting hazardous or harmful drinking (15.6%); and (CAMH Monitor)

WHEREAS Ontario youth (grades 9-12) have concerning levels of alcohol consumption with 69.4% having drunk in the past year, 32.9% binge drinking (5 or more drinks), and 27.5% of students reporting drinking at a hazardous level; and (OSDUHS Report)

WHEREAS Each year alcohol puts this province in a \$456 million deficit due to direct costs related to healthcare and enforcement; and (G. Thomas, CCSA)

WHEREAS Billions of dollars are spent each year in Canada on indirect costs associated with alcohol use (illness, disability, and death) including lost productivity in the workplace and home; and (The Costs of Sub Abuse in CAN, 2002)

WHEREAS Nearly half of all deaths attributable to alcohol are from injuries including unintentional injuries (drowning, burns, poisoning and falls) and intentional injuries (deliberate acts of violence against oneself or others); and (WHO – Alcohol and Injury in EDs, 2007)

WHEREAS Regulating the physical availability of alcohol is one of the top alcohol policy practices in reducing harm; and (Barbor et al., 2010)

WHEREAS The World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) has indicated that alcohol is the world's third largest risk factor for disease burden and that the harmful use of alcohol results in approximately 2.5 million deaths each year. Alcohol is associated with increased levels of health and social costs in Ontario and is causally related to over 65 medical conditions;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) petition the Ontario government to conduct a formal review and impact analysis of the health and economic effects of alcohol in Ontario and develop a provincial Alcohol Strategy.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Resolution **CARRIED**

TITLE: Promoting Public Health in Ontario

SPONSOR: Peterborough County-City Health Unit

WHEREAS the term “public health” is not always well understood by members of the public, potential partners, and policy-makers; and

WHEREAS on a daily basis, Ontario’s public health sector contributes to keeping Ontarians healthy and safe through health protection, disease prevention and management, and health promotion activities; and

WHEREAS a strong public health sector is vital to a healthy and safe Ontario and yet the public tends not to think about public health except in times of crisis; and

WHEREAS public relations campaigns provide measurable benefits to audiences and health units through increased knowledge and confidence in the public health system, improved access to services, enhanced health literacy and stronger relationships with priority populations; and

WHEREAS Ontario’s public health system consists of governmental, non-governmental, and community organizations operating at the local, provincial and federal levels, yet the primary responsibility for program delivery lies with 36 Boards of Health which have limited resources and access to province-wide communication providers;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that alPHa request all three funding Ministries (Health and Long-Term Care, Health Promotion and Sport, and Children and Youth Services) to fund a single, centralized provincial public relations campaign to increase the profile of the public health system and public health issues among Ontario residents.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Resolution CARRIED AS AMENDED

TITLE: Public Health Supporting Early Learning and Care

SPONSOR: alPHa Board of Directors

WHEREAS the report “With our Best Future in Mind” (Charles E. Pascal, 2009) has been provided to the Premier of Ontario and provides recommendations on early childhood development in Ontario; and

WHEREAS supporting families and healthy early childhood development is a core part of the mandate of public health; and

WHEREAS public health work is driven by the population health approach; and

WHEREAS the evidence supports investing in early childhood development as a strategy to enable health and resilience throughout life; and

WHEREAS high quality early childhood interventions are extremely cost effective with significant societal returns on investment; and

WHEREAS achieving a politically sustainable system to support early childhood development will require support from decision-makers and the general public across the political spectrum; and

WHEREAS local public health has a unique role in early childhood development as a community agency that can take early learning and development beyond the walls of centres to reach the most vulnerable children and their families in their preferred setting; and

WHEREAS both local and provincial public health agencies have a key role to play in guiding the overall approach to supporting early childhood development; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive approach to early childhood development needs to include core services for all children and families, locally adapted services to address community context and intensive services to address the individual needs of the most vulnerable children and families; and

WHEREAS local and provincial public health agencies should continue to work with partners to clearly define better outcome measures and disseminate information about progress toward early childhood development goals more broadly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that alPHa will actively engage in advocacy to strengthen public health programs to support families and healthy early childhood development;

AND FURTHER that alPHa will forward this resolution to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, Ministry of Education, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Early Learning Advisor and in addition alPHa encourages all member agencies to transfer knowledge and information to decision-makers and the general public about the value of supporting early childhood development and the importance of adequate investment in early childhood development;

