November 28, 2016

The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4
ehoskins.mpp@liberal.ola.org

Dear Minister Hoskins,

RE: Bill 5 – the Greater Access to Hepatitis C Treatment Act, 2016

As you are no doubt aware, approximately 110,000 Ontarians are living with hepatitis C. Individuals can live with hepatitis C for many years without experiencing any symptoms, even though the disease slowly damages their liver. If left untreated, hepatitis C can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and ultimately premature death.

Fortunately there is a cure for hepatitis C, with new treatments having demonstrated a 95 percent effectiveness rate in restoring individuals to health. While new treatments have shown great promise in curing individuals with hepatitis C, many individuals cannot access these highly effective treatments until they meet restrictive clinical criteria that require that an individual’s liver be substantially damaged.

The Board of Health for Peterborough Public Health was pleased to hear about and supports MPP Sylvia Jones’ private Member’s bill, Bill 5 – the Greater Access to Hepatitis C Treatment Act, 2016. If adopted, MPP Jones’ private Member’s bill would ensure every individual in Ontario with hepatitis C will receive treatment upon the recommendation from their physician, no matter what stage their disease is in. If Bill 5 is adopted, an individual will no longer have to wait and let their liver further deteriorate before receiving lifesaving treatment.

The board of health hopes that your government will support the principle of treating at risk individuals before evidence of harm exists. A universal program, where physicians are able to access curative treatment for their patients based on their own assessments of readiness and suitability, would be far better than the current limited access that exists. Thank you for considering this policy change.

Yours in health,

Original signed by

Mayor Mary Smith
Acting Chair, Board of Health