

*The Council of Ontario  
Medical Officers of  
Health (COMOH) is a  
Section of*



**ALPHA's members are  
the public health units  
in Ontario.**

**ALPHA Sections:**

Boards of Health  
Section  
Council of Ontario  
Medical Officers of  
Health (COMOH)

**Affiliate**

**Organizations:**

Association of Ontario  
Public Health Business  
Administrators  
Association of  
Public Health  
Epidemiologists  
in Ontario  
Association of  
Supervisors of Public  
Health Inspectors of  
Ontario  
Health Promotion  
Ontario  
Ontario Association of  
Public Health Dentistry  
Ontario Association of  
Public Health Nursing  
Leaders  
Ontario Dietitians in  
Public Health

Hon. Vic Fedeli  
Minister of Finance  
Room 281, Main Legislative Building,  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

March 14, 2019

Dear Minister Fedeli,

**Re: Alcohol Choice & Convenience Roundtable Discussions**

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Thank you for inviting the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health to your recent alcohol retail expansion roundtable on March 4, 2019. We appreciated the opportunity to meet with MPP Downey and Ministry staff to share a public health and safety perspective on this important issue.

As leaders of Ontario's 35 local public health agencies, we are committed to protecting and promoting the health of all Ontarians. We recognize the need for balance between health and safety, and economics. As Drs. de Villa and Hopkins described at the roundtable, we encourage the government to think holistically about the benefits and risks of alcohol modernization, as well as the long-term impacts.

Alcohol is a commodity unlike others and should be treated as such. It is responsible for the second highest rate of death and disease in Canada (second only to tobacco), contributes to more hospitalizations than heart attacks, and costs Ontario taxpayers \$5.3 billion on alcohol-related health care, law enforcement, corrections, lost productivity, motor vehicle collisions, injuries, and social problems combined. Expanding access to alcohol effectively works against efforts to reduce healthcare costs, hallway medicine, and keep more money in taxpayers' pockets.

During the roundtable discussion, Drs. de Villa and Hopkins were pleased to note that there are areas of agreement between public health and industry representatives. These included continuing the Liquor Control Board of Ontario's (LCBO) role as alcohol supply distributor, along with continuing the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario's (AGCO) enforcement role. With any expansion of alcohol availability, appropriate resourcing will be necessary for the AGCO to effectively carry out its role.

To support a balance between public health and safety, and economics, and given our current environment of legalized cannabis, opioids, and hallway medicine, we encourage the government to develop a provincial alcohol strategy that incorporates health goals. This would include a monitoring and evaluation plan to measure intended and unintended impacts of policy change.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in the roundtable. We look forward to continuing to work with the Ministry of Finance on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Mackie'.

Dr. Chris Mackie  
Chair, Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health

**COPY:** Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Doug Downey, MPP, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance