

MEMBER UPDATE

CPHA condemns Ontario's expansion of alcohol sales

CPHA expresses concern and disapproval over today's [announcement](#) by the Ontario government regarding the expansion of alcohol sales to include convenience stores, grocery stores, and big-box stores.

This decision is alarming in light of the extensive evidence on the public health risks associated with increased alcohol availability. It comes from a Premier who made light of those risks in his 'buck-a-beer' election campaign, and who has consistently favoured the interests of the alcohol, vaping, and convenience store industries over the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Alcohol is a leading preventable cause of death, disability and social problems, including certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, unintentional injuries and violence. In 2017, alcohol caused 18,000 deaths in Canada. That same year, the costs associated with alcohol use in Canada were \$16.6 billion, with \$5.4 billion of that sum spent on health care.

Research has demonstrated that convenience of access to alcohol is the primary factor leading to alcohol-related harms. This is especially true for younger people, including children, teens, and young adults. The adverse effects associated with alcohol consumption include increased dependency, chronic health conditions, injuries, violence, suicide, mental health problems, and social issues such as intimate partner violence and impaired driving.

Key Concerns

1. **Increased accessibility and consumption:** Expanding the sale of alcohol to more retail locations will increase its accessibility and consumption. Research shows that greater availability of alcohol leads to higher rates of consumption and, consequently, more alcohol-related harms.
2. **Public health and safety:** Enhanced access to alcohol can lead to increased instances of impaired driving, violence, and other public safety issues. The social and economic costs associated with alcohol misuse are substantial and well-documented.
3. **Youth exposure:** Convenience stores are frequented by youth, raising concerns about underage drinking. Studies have shown that increased exposure and accessibility can lead to higher rates of alcohol use among minors.
4. **Economic impact on health care system:** The long-term costs to the health care system due to alcohol-related diseases and injuries are substantial. Ontario's health care resources are already stretched, and this policy could exacerbate the burden on hospitals and medical services.

CPHA urges the Ontario government to reconsider this decision and prioritize the health and safety of its residents. Public health policies should be informed by evidence and aimed at reducing harm, not increasing convenience at the cost of public well-being.