



Joint statement on alcohol policy

This week marks National Addictions Awareness Week. CAMH and the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) have been engaging the people of Ontario in important conversations about alcohol use and accessibility for decades. Together, we have developed effective and responsive programs and policies to support the reduction of alcohol-related harm.

Alcohol use remains a leading cause of disease and death in Canada and is tremendously costly to provincial coffers. In 2014, alcohol use cost Ontario \$5.3 billion in related harms, including \$1.5 and \$1.3 billion for healthcare and criminal justice respectively.

Evidence also shows us that increasing alcohol availability can lead to more alcohol-related harm. As such, our organizations are concerned with the recent changes to the sale of alcohol in Ontario, including, reducing the minimum retail price of beer to \$1 (for beers that are ABV 5.6% or lower), halting the annual automatic increase in the beer tax, and extending the hours of sale for alcohol retail outlets.

These changes follow on a fundamental shift in the retail sale of alcohol over the past four years with the introduction of alcohol sales in grocery stores and a recent commitment to increase availability of beer and wine in convenience stores.

On Addictions Awareness Week, we are calling on the Government of Ontario to join other provinces in developing a comprehensive provincial alcohol strategy, in consultation with the public and stakeholders and with the goal of mitigating the risks of alcohol use in the face of increased availability. We believe that it is possible to create a healthier alcohol culture in Ontario that balances all interests, including public health, economic development, and consumer preferences.

CAMH and OPHA will continue to engage Ontarians in a meaningful dialogue about alcohol availability and the importance of a provincial alcohol strategy. We look forward to working with the government to implement measures to improve health in Ontario.

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