



Ontario Public Health Association
 l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
 Established/Établi 1949

The mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.

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Constituent Societies

Alliance for Healthier Communities

Association of Public Health
 Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO)

Association of Supervisors of
 Public Health Inspectors of Ontario
 (ASPHIO)

Canadian Institute of Public Health
 Inspectors (Ontario Branch) (CIPHIO)

Community Health Nurses'
 Initiatives Group (RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario (HPO)

Ontario Association of Public
 Health Dentistry (OAPHD)

Ontario Association of Public Health
 Nursing Leaders, (OAPHNL)

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
 (ODPH)

Ontario Society of Physical Activity
 Promoters in Public Health (OSPAPPH)

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February 8, 2019

The Honourable Victor Fedeli
 Minister of Finance
 c/o Budget Secretariat
 Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
 95 Grosvenor Street
 Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z1

Dear Mr. Fedeli,

Re: 2019 Budget Consultations

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) appreciates the opportunity to participate in Ontario's 2019 budget consultations. Below, we recommend three cost-effective strategies for promoting health that can contribute to system efficiencies that can help to end hallway medicine. It is especially critical to ensure dedication of funds for health promotion and chronic disease prevention with health system transformation on the horizon.

Vaping Regulations

Vaping among youth has increased in the last two years¹, and e-cigarette use has been found to increase the risk of cigarette use in youth.³ OPHA is concerned that increased exposure to vapor products through display and promotion will lead to further increased vaping and tobacco use in youth, negating progress made over the last twenty years to de-normalize tobacco use. Despite recent declines in tobacco use among youth, new evidence has indicated an increase in flavored tobacco use from 53% in 2016 to 67% in 2017.⁸

Ontario spends over \$2 billion dollars per year to treat and care for people with tobacco-related health concerns, and \$5 billion dollars per year is lost in productivity costs due to tobacco-related health issues.⁴ Stricter regulations around the display and promotion of vapor products can serve to save taxpayer dollars and reduce burden on the health care system.

OPHA urges your government to protect our youth by implementing stricter regulations around the display and promotion of vapor products.

Alcohol Strategy

Since 2015, Ontario's healthcare system has seen 43,000 alcohol-related emergency room visits and an average of 66 hospitalizations per day.⁵ In

2014, alcohol use cost Ontario \$1.5 and \$1.3 billion for alcohol-related healthcare and criminal justice, respectively.⁵ Recent policy and regulatory changes to increase Ontarians' access to alcohol are unlikely to reverse these costly trends.

OPHA urges your government to adopt a provincial alcohol strategy to promote health, spare unnecessary healthcare costs associated with alcohol use, and demonstrate provincial leadership. Such a strategy should include public education, harm-reduction policy, enforcement of marketing guidelines, and improved monitoring of alcohol-related harms. With more retail outlets envisaged, this strategy should also include increased investment in inspection and enforcement.

Chronic Disease Prevention

Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability in Ontario. Modifiable risk factors associated with chronic disease, such as tobacco use, alcohol use, poor diet and physical inactivity, cost Ontario almost \$90 billion in healthcare expenditures over nine years.⁶ Obesity costs Ontario \$1.6 billion annually, and physical inactivity creates an economic burden of \$3.4 billion in Ontario.⁶

In a recent study led by Doug Manuel, researchers found that interventions such as Smoke Free Ontario, which focus on the prevention of chronic disease risk factors, have saved Ontario \$4.9 billion in healthcare costs.⁹ Reducing the burden of chronic disease can help to keep Ontarians out of hospitals, thereby putting more money into Ontarians' pockets, decreasing hospital wait times and reducing hallway medicine.

OPHA urges your government to safeguard investments in health promotion strategies and the public health agency budgets which contribute to chronic disease prevention. We also encourage your government to consider investing in a comprehensive chronic disease prevention strategy, the urgency and importance of which have been highlighted by Ontario's Auditor General in 2017.

Conclusion

With emerging health threats such as increased access to alcohol, increased rates of vaping and tobacco use, and growing chronic disease burden, there is an urgent need to invest in health promotion and chronic disease prevention to ensure opportunities for all to be healthy. OPHA would be pleased to discuss both short and medium term preventative initiatives that could support improved health outcomes, cost savings and ending hallway medicine.

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by Kristia Maatta, OPHA, on behalf of



Pegeen Walsh
Executive Director, OPHA

About OPHA

Created in 1949, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a no-partisan, non-profit organization that brings together a broad spectrum of groups and individuals concerned about people's health. OPHA's members come from various backgrounds and sectors - from the various disciplines in public health, health care, academic, non-profit to the private sector. They are united by OPHA's mission of providing leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthening the impact of people, who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. This mission is achieved through professional development, information and analysis on issues affecting community and public health, access to multidisciplinary networks, advocacy on health public policy and the provision of expertise and consultation.

www.opha.on.ca @OPHA_Ontario

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