

May 6, 2024

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier

[Premier@ontario.ca](mailto:Premier@ontario.ca)

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

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Dear Premier Ford and Minister Jones,

The Board of Health for the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU) met on April 18, 2024, to review the 2023 Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Annual Report, "Balancing Act: An All-of-Society Approach to Substance Use and Harms."

We extend our gratitude to Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Kieran Moore for shedding light on the pressing and intricate issue of substance use and associated harms. In HKPRDHU communities, the repercussions of substance use are of escalating concern. From 2014 to 2018 there were 376 deaths, 1,472 hospitalizations, and 3,529 emergency department visits due to tobacco-related issues among adults aged 35 and above living in Northumberland County, the City of Kawartha Lakes, and in Haliburton County. In 2022 alone, there were 3 deaths, 503 hospitalizations, and 1,028 emergency department visits attributable to alcohol-related harms, along with 35 deaths, 39 hospitalizations, and 195 emergency department visits due to opioid-related issues.

We commend the report's comprehensive examination of all substances, its emphasis on the social determinants of health, acknowledgment of Indigenous perspectives including decolonization lenses, advocacy for bold policy reforms, and focus on upstream approaches. While responding to substance use harms collectively as an "All-of-Society" endeavor will pose challenges, we align with the report's conclusion that failure to invest upstream will result in preventable deaths, ongoing family suffering, and substantial provincial expenditures covering healthcare, social, and legal/policing costs associated with substance use harms.

The Board of Health for HKPRDHU stands in solidarity with recent correspondence from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA), endorsing this report, and echoes their appreciation to the CMOH and his team for their leadership in advocating evidence-based strategies to prevent and alleviate harms related to tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, and opioids.

We pledge our commitment to embracing the inclusive all-society approach and fostering continued collaboration with our community partners. This entails jointly reviewing, endorsing, and implementing the recommendations delineated in the report.



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Yours truly,

BOARD OF HEALTH FOR THE HALIBURTON,  
KAWARTHA, PINE RIDGE DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

***Original signed by:***

David Marshall  
Chair, Board of Health  
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit

Cc:

Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Honourable Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health  
Honourable David Piccini, MPP, Northumberland-Peterborough South  
Laurie Scott, MPP, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock  
Ontario Boards of Health  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies