

May 28, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford:

The Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (KFL&A) Board of Health passed the following motions on May 22, 2024:

THAT the KFL&A Board of Health commend the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario on the release of his 2023 Annual Report *Balancing Act: An All-of-Society Approach to Addressing Substance Use and Harms*, and acknowledge his leadership on his call for a collective response to address the burden of harms associated with substance use.

AND THAT the KFL&A Board of Health urges the Government of Ontario to adopt the evidence informed all-in society approach to addressing substance use and the associated harms proposed by the Chief Medical Office of Health for Ontario in his 2023 Annual Report, beginning most urgently with developing the four provincial strategies outlined by the Chief Medical Officer of Health aimed at addressing the harms of substance use in Ontario:

- 1. Reinvigorate the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, focusing on populations and regions with high rates of tobacco use. Expand the strategy to create a comprehensive, coherent public health-oriented framework for regulating vaping and all nicotine-containing products.**
- 2. Develop a comprehensive cannabis strategy designed to reduce cannabis-related harms, focusing on youth and young adults who have the highest rates of cannabis use.**
- 3. Develop and implement, in collaboration with stakeholders, including local public health units and the alcohol regulatory system, and in consultation with the alcohol industry, a comprehensive alcohol strategy designed to reduce alcohol-related harms.**
- 4. Develop and implement, in collaboration with stakeholders– including people with lived or living experience with substance use – a comprehensive strategy designed to reduce opioid-related harms.**

On behalf of the KFL&A Board of Health, I would like to express our congratulation to Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario on the release of his 2023 Annual Report - *Balancing Act: An All-of-Society Approach to Addressing Substance Use and Harms*. We strongly support the approach outlined in his report featuring a multipronged all-of-society approach to addressing the burden of harms associated with substance use.

Like many Ontario communities, the burden of substance use harms in KFL&A is significant. In an average year, 17.5 percent of deaths can be attributed to smoking and 4 percent can be attributed to alcohol use. Approximately, one in five KFL&A residents 19 years of age and older consume seven or more drinks per week, increasing their risk of alcohol related harms such as heart disease and stroke. Cannabis use has increased since legalization in KFL&A and our rates of related emergency room visits is higher than the province, particularly among people 13 to 25 years of age. Further still, our rates of opioid related morbidity and mortality were higher than Ontario in 2022.

Given the complex drivers of substance use and the differing harms, society's collective response must be evidence-informed, substance specific and comprehensive, including health promotion interventions, regulatory measures, harm reduction and treatment programs and services, and through monitoring and reporting. We urge you to consider the comprehensive, evidence-informed strategies recommended to address the burden of harms related to alcohol, tobacco and vaping, cannabis, and opioids in Dr. Moore's report.

KFL&A Public Health is committed to working collaboratively with municipalities, healthcare, social services, enforcement agencies, Indigenous partners, people with lived and living experience, and other interest holders to address the harms associated with substance use. An all-in-society approach to substance use will better support the health of all Ontarians.

We look forward to opportunities to work together on this urgent public health issue.

Sincerely,



Wess Garrod
KFL&A Board of Health Chair

Copy to: Hon. Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Ric Breese, MPP Hastings-Lennox and Addington
Ted Hsu, MPP Kingston and the Islands
John Jordan, MPP Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Boards of Health