

April 16, 2014

Simcoe Muskoka Mayors and Councillors  
(See attached list)

Dear Mayor and Council:

As the Chair of the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (AMDHU), I am writing in response to the provincial announcement to allow for VQA wines to be sold at farmers' markets. The Board of Health has communicated to the provincial government its concerns regarding the potential for increased harm to the health of the public with the increased accessibility of alcohol that would occur with proposed changes to allow for VQA wines to be sold at farmers' markets (Appendix A).

Research has demonstrated that increased accessibility to alcohol - as determined by the number of retail outlets and vendors per capita, hours and days of sale, and type of retailing system – is associated with increased alcohol consumption and, in turn, increased harms from alcohol. Government operated retailing systems such as the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) have been shown to be significantly more effective in controlling access to alcohol and are more effective in preventing alcohol related harms.<sup>1</sup>

The expansion of the sale of wine at farmers' markets would erode important aspects of alcohol control policies put in place to mitigate alcohol related harms in Ontario. This privatization of alcohol sales would set a precedent for the further expansion of the sale of other alcohol products in other venues across Ontario. In addition to increasing the availability of alcohol, it would further normalize alcohol as an innocuous and common product for members of the general public including children and youth attending farmers' markets to purchase local fresh produce. Alcohol is no ordinary commodity and should not be treated as such.

At its meeting on April 16, 2014, the Board of Health passed a resolution urging all councils of the municipalities within the County of Simcoe, the District of Muskoka, and the cities of Barrie and Orillia not to allow the sale of VQA wines at farmers' markets within their jurisdiction by providing the Registrar of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO) with a notice of objection, as allowed for under the proposed regulations.

Alcohol is the second leading risk factor, following tobacco, for disease and disability in Canada<sup>2</sup>. It contributes to a range of injuries, including fatalities from impaired driving, and to a variety of chronic conditions including cancers, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, mental illness, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and others. Further, the negative consequences of alcohol go beyond the individual, to affect the drinker's family, social contacts, co-workers, community members, and strangers<sup>3</sup>. The annual cost of health care, law enforcement, corrections, prevention, lost productivity, and related problems is estimated to be \$5.3 billion in Ontario, which exceeds revenues by more than \$456 million<sup>4</sup>.

In Simcoe Muskoka, it is estimated that 105 chronic disease-related deaths and 130 injury related-deaths occurred as a result of alcohol consumption between 2000 and 2005. In addition, according to Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) data there were an estimated 1,256 chronic disease-related hospitalizations and 6,840 injury related hospitalizations directly attributable to alcohol use between 2003 and 2009<sup>5</sup>.

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**Barrie:**  
15 Sperling Drive  
Barrie, ON  
L4M 6K9  
705-721-7520  
FAX: 705-721-1495

**Collingwood:**  
280 Pretty River Pkwy.  
Collingwood, ON  
L9Y 4J5  
705-445-0804  
FAX: 705-445-6498

**Cookstown:**  
2-25 King Street S.  
Cookstown, ON  
L0L 1L0  
705-458-1103  
FAX: 705-458-0105

**Gravenhurst:**  
2-5 Pineridge Gate  
Gravenhurst, ON  
P1P 1Z3  
705-684-9090  
FAX: 705-684-9887

**Huntsville:**  
34 Chaffey St.  
Huntsville, ON  
P1H 1K1  
705-789-8813  
FAX: 705-789-7245

**Midland:**  
B-865 Hugel Ave.  
Midland, ON  
L4R 1X8  
705-526-9324  
FAX: 705-526-1513

**Orillia:**  
120-169 Front St. S.  
Orillia, ON  
L3V 4S8  
705-325-9565  
FAX: 705-325-2091

The provincial approach to VQA wine sales in farmers' markets, through an option to send notice of objection by municipalities, is one example of where our communities have an opportunity to adopt a local approach to alcohol policy and regulation that is grounded in a strong understanding of the health, social, and economic costs of this substance.

As an organization, we support a culture of moderation regarding alcohol, where drinking limits are within Canada's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines. We also support the availability of safe and nutritious locally grown fresh produce through venues including farmers' markets. However, the provision of alcohol within these venues would be contrary to the best interests of the health of the public. The sale of locally produced wine is best accomplished through the LCBO which has the checks and balances in place to address the sale of alcohol in a socially responsible manner.

SMDHU staff are available to work collaboratively with members of council and municipal staff throughout Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka to explore alcohol policies that will benefit residents of our region. For further information or for assistance, please contact Dr. Lisa Simon, Associate Medical Officer of Health at 705-721-7520 ext. 7244, or Janice Greco, Manager of the Injury and Substance Misuse Prevention Program at [janice.greco@smdhu.org](mailto:janice.greco@smdhu.org) or 705-721-7520 ext. 7288.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY**

Barry Ward  
Chair, Board of Health

Att. (1)

- c. Mr. Rod Jackson, MPP  
Mr. Norm Miller, MPP  
Mr. Garfield Dunlop, MPP  
Mr. Jim Wilson, MPP  
Ms. Julia Munro, MPP  
Local Health Integration Networks in Simcoe Muskoka

**References**

- 1 Monteiro M., Giesbrecht N., Wettlaufer A., Diehl A. Policies to reduce alcohol-related injury. In Prevention of Alcohol-related injuries in the Americas: from Evidence to Policy Action. Pan American Health Organization, Washington, D.C. 2013  
[http://www.paho.org/mex/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=861](http://www.paho.org/mex/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=861)
- 2 The Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health (2011) World Health Organization. Retrieved April 4, 2014 from: [http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/global\\_alcohol\\_report/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/en/index.html)
- 3 GIESBRECHT<sup>N</sup>, CUKIER<sup>S</sup> and STEEVES,D, (2010). Collateral damage from alcohol: implications of 'second-hand effects of drinking' for populations and health priorities. Addiction. [Volume 105, Issue 8](#), pages 1323–1325.
- 4 Rehm, J., Baliunas, D., Brochu, S., Fischer, B., Gram, W., Patra, J., Popova, S., Samocinska-Ham, A., Taylor, B. (2006). The Cost of Substance Abuse in Canada 2002 – Highlights. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. Retrieved April 4, 2014 from: <http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/topics/alcohol/Pages/default.aspx>
- 5 Focus on Health Stats- Alcohol Related Harm in Simcoe Muskoka (2012) retrieved April 6, 2014 from: [http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/Libraries/Focus\\_Reports/AlcoholFocusReportFinal2012.sflb.ashx](http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/Libraries/Focus_Reports/AlcoholFocusReportFinal2012.sflb.ashx)

Letter sent to the following list of Mayors and copied to Municipal Clerks Electronically

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Mayor Larry Braid       | Township of Georgian Bay<br>523 Hiawatha Rd<br>P.O. Box 146<br>Port Severn, ON L0K 1S0                         |
| Mayor Paisley Donaldson | Town of Gravenhurst<br>3 – 5 Pineridge Gate<br>Gravenhurst, ON<br>P1P 1Z3                                      |
| Mayor Bob Young         | Lake of Bays Township<br>1012 Dwight Beach Road<br>Dwight, ON P0A 1H0  |
| Mayor Ray Millar        | Township of Tiny<br>130 Balm Beach Road W.<br>Perkinsfield, ON L0L 2J0   |
| Mayor Gerry Marshall    | Town of Penetanguishene<br>10 Robert Street West<br>P.O. Box 5009<br>Penetanguishene, ON L9M 2G2               |
| Mayor Mike Burkett      | Township of Severn<br>P.O. Box 159<br>Orillia, ON L3V 6J3  |
| Mayor Cal Patterson     | Town of Wasaga Beach<br>30 Lewis Street<br>Wasaga Beach, ON L9Z 1A1  |
| Mayor Sandra Cooper     | Town of Collingwood<br>P.O. Box 157<br>97 Hurontario Street<br>Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z5                         |
| Mayor Terry Dowdall     | Township of Essa<br>5786 County Road 21<br>Utopia, ON L0M 1T0  |
| Mayor Doug White        | Town of Bradford West Gwilliambury<br>100 Dissette Street, Units 7 & 8<br>P.O. Box 100<br>Bradford, ON L3Z 2A7 |
| Mayor Jeff Lehman       | City of Barrie<br>70 Collier Street<br>Box 400<br>Barrie, ON L4M 4T5   |
| Mayor Graydon Smith     | Town of Bracebridge<br>1000 Taylor Court<br>Bracebridge, ON P1L 1R6  |
| Mayor Claude Doughty    | Town of Huntsville<br>37 Main Street East<br>Huntsville, ON P1H 1A1  |
| Mayor Barb Baguley      | Town of Innisfil<br>2101 Innisfil Beach Rd.  |

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
|                       | Innisfil, ON L9S 1A1   |
| Mayor Angelo Orsi     | City of Orillia<br>50 Andrew Street South<br>Suite 300<br>Orillia, ON L3V 7T5                      |
| Mayor Bill Duffy      | Township of Ramara<br>2297 Highway 12<br>P.O. Box 130<br>Brechtin, ON L0K 1B0                      |
| Mayor Harry Hughes    | Township of Oro-Medonte<br>148 Line 7 South<br>Oro, ON L0L 2X0                                     |
| Mayor Scott Warnock   | Township of Tay<br>450 Park Street<br>P.O. Box 100<br>Victoria Harbour, ON L0K 2A0                 |
| Mayor Ken Ferguson    | Township of Clearview<br>217 Gideon Street<br>Stayner, ON L0M 1S0                                  |
| Mayor Gordon McKay    | Town of Midland<br>575 Dominion Avenue<br>Midland, ON L4R 1R2                                      |
| Mayor Mike MacEachern | Town of New Tecumseth<br>P.O. Box 910<br>10 Wellington Street East<br>Alliston, ON L9R 1A1         |
| Mayor Alice Murphy    | Township of Muskoka Lakes<br>P.O. Box 129<br>1 Bailey Street<br>Port Carling, ON P0B 1J0           |
| Mayor Tom Walsh       | Township of Adjala-Tosorontio<br>7855 30 <sup>th</sup> Sideroad<br>R.R. #1<br>Alliston, ON L9R 1V1 |
| Mayor Linda Collins   | Township of Springwater<br>2231 Nursery Road<br>Minesing, ON L0L 1Y2                               |