



April 30, 2004

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Main Legislative Building  
Room 381  
Queen's Park, Ontario  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A4

Dear Premier:

**Re: the Possible Privatization of the LCBO**

I am writing this letter, as Medical Officer of Health for the City of Ottawa Public Health Department, to urge you to consider the public health implications in discussions regarding the privatization of the LCBO.

Alcohol is a serious risk factor for injury. Recent research that suggests that the burden of illness related to alcohol is almost as high as tobacco. The research also indicates the most effective preventive measure is not education but policy. Controlling access to alcohol (including hours of sale, numbers of outlets, taxation levels) is a key factor.

There is research evidence that privatizing the LCBO would lead to increased access to alcohol, increased consumption and therefore more alcohol related harm. Privatizing alcohol monopolies is typically associated with increased numbers of alcohol sales outlets, increased density of outlets, and expansion of hours of operations, all of which have been shown to raise overall population consumption, sales to the underaged and intoxicated patrons, as well as increased problems with monitoring and enforcement.

State retail monopolies currently provide the most effective means to protect the public interest, especially when they integrate strong public health and safety objectives. Conversely, a privatized retail alcohol system makes it more difficult for governments to enact public health-oriented policies and can result in the erosion of existing controls on alcohol. Retail alcohol monopolies with a strong regulatory agenda have a key role in preventing alcohol-related harm, and therefore should be maintained.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cushman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert Cushman  
Medical Officer of Health

cc: Minister of Finance  
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Deputy Minister of Consumer and Business Services  
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Public Health Association