



May 5, 2023

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

Re: Endorsement of [Timiskaming Health Unit's Motion \(#6R-2023\)](#) calling on the Government of Canada to amend the Food and Drug Act to make mandatory that all alcohol beverage containers have enhanced alcohol labels affixed and supporting in principle, [Bill S-254](#) and [Motion 61](#).

On behalf of the Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy (TDAS) Steering Committee, we are writing to express our endorsement of the Timiskaming Health Unit's motion (#6R-2023) calling for the implementation of enhanced alcohol warning labels. Aligned with the recommendations of the World Health Organization¹ and Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health,² implementing federally mandated labels on all alcoholic beverage containers sold in Canada is essential to informing consumers of alcohol-related health risks.

Alcohol is a highly addictive psychoactive substance that costs the Canadian economy \$19.7 billion annually, with \$6.3 billion attributed to health care costs.³ Alcohol claims an estimated 17,000 Canadian lives per year³ and is the leading risk factor for death and disability among Canadians between the ages of 15 and 49.^{2,3} Alcohol consumption is a risk factor for most cardiovascular diseases, including coronary artery disease,⁴ heart failure,⁵ hypertension,⁶ atrial fibrillation,⁷ and stroke.⁸ It is the direct cause of over 60 chronic diseases including at least seven types of cancer.^{2,9,10} The most recent data project that 1 in 2 Canadians will receive a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime.¹¹ However, a significant proportion of Canadians are unaware that alcohol is a carcinogen, and attempts to raise awareness to this effect have been met with extreme resistance from the alcohol industry.^{12,13} Standard drink labels and health warning labels that are visible, easy to read, and accurately relay the information effectively assist consumers in monitoring their consumption, raising awareness about alcohol-related harm, and mitigating risks.^{14,15}

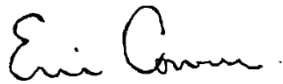
At least 20 countries require health warning labels on alcoholic beverage containers, including the United States, Australia, and France.¹⁶ Governments are obliged to protect the health of their citizens and enact policies that promote public health in the least intrusive manner. A federal policy enacting mandatory alcohol labels, as described above, would ensure all Canadians can make informed decisions without interfering with their autonomy to make those decisions.

The goal of the Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy is to prevent and reduce harms associated with substance use in the Timiskaming area.¹⁷ Alcohol-related harms can be significantly reduced by

informing consumers about the known health risks and providing access to tools to assist them in minimizing those risks through mandatory enhanced alcohol labels.

In closing, we thank the Honourable Lisa Marie Barron for introducing the motion and her work in moving Motion-61 forward. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Erin Cowan



Angele Desormeau

Co-Chairs Timiskaming Drug & Alcohol Strategy Steering Committee

Copy to:

- Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health
- Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
- Hon. Lisa Marie Barron, MP Nanaimo-Ladysmith
- Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada
- Hon. Anthony Rota, MP Nipissing Timiskaming
- Hon. Charlie Angus, MP Timmins-James Bay
- Canadian Public Health Association
- Drug Strategy Network of Ontario

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