

February 19, 2026

The Honourable Rosemary Moodie, Senator
Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4
Sent via email: Rosemary.Moodie@sen.parl.gc.ca

Dear Senator Moodie,

Re: Endorsement of Middlesex-London Health Unit Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling

On behalf of the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) Board of Health, we are writing to formally express our strong support for the Middlesex-London Health Unit's (MLHU) *Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling* and the recommendations outlined in Report No. 0526, including support for federal action through [Bill S202, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act](#) (warning label on alcoholic beverages).

We commend the Middlesex-London Board of Health and Health Unit staff for their leadership in advancing an evidence-informed policy position to address the substantial and preventable health harms associated with alcohol consumption. Alcohol remains a leading risk factor for chronic disease, injury, and premature death in Canada and is the only legalized psychoactive substance that is not required to carry comprehensive, regulated health warning labels.

Local Alcohol-Related Health Context

The concerns outlined by MLHU are strongly reflected in our own region. Alcohol attributable harms place a significant and ongoing burden on the health and wellbeing of communities served by the Northwestern Health Unit. Surveillance data demonstrates that alcohol-related morbidity and mortality in our region occurs at rates far exceeding provincial averages and continue to strain already overstretched health, emergency, and social service systems.

In 2023, the rate of emergency department visits due to alcohol attributable causes in the NWHU area was 7,464.3 per 100,000; more than **thirteen times higher** than the Ontario rate. Alcohol attributable hospitalizations occurred at a rate of 1,065.6 per 100,000, and mortality reached 39.0 deaths per 100,000, both substantially higher than provincial levels. These impacts are not isolated and have shown increasing trends over time.

Patterns of alcohol consumption further reinforce the scale of this issue. More than one in five adults (21.6%) in our region report heavy drinking, and over half (50.9%) exceed [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#), rates that are statistically higher than those observed across Ontario. Alcohol availability is also high, with Northwestern Health Unit having the highest number of alcohol outlets per capita in the province, increasing population exposure and access.

Together, these data underscore that alcohol-related harm is a significant public health issue locally and one that disproportionately affects community safety, health equity, and health system capacity.

Rationale for Alcohol Labelling

We strongly support MLHU's position that mandatory, standardized alcohol labelling is a modest yet effective public health intervention that helps support informed consumer choice. Evidence consistently shows that clear, well designed alcohol labels:

- Increase awareness of cancer and chronic disease risks, even at low levels of consumption;
- Improve understanding of standard drink size and alcohol strength;
- Support individual decision-making at point of purchase and point of pour; and
- Complement Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health in a format that reaches consumers equitably; regardless of income, education, or geography.

Alcohol labelling aligns with Canada's approach to other legalized substances, such as tobacco and nonmedical cannabis, both of which are required to display standardized health warnings and product information. Addressing this policy gap for alcohol is an important and evidence-informed step toward reducing preventable harm.

Endorsement and Call to Action

The Northwestern Health Unit Board of Health fully endorses:

- The Middlesex-London Health Unit Policy Position on Alcohol Labelling (Appendix C, Report No. 0526); and
- [The Statement from Provincial and Territorial Chief Medical Officers of Health on Labelling of Alcohol Products.](#)

We support federal action through Bill S-202 to mandate comprehensive, regulated alcohol labels that include:

1. Prominent, rotating health warning messages;
2. Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health; and
3. Clear standard drink information per container and per serving.

A coordinated national approach to alcohol labelling will strengthen health equity, reduce preventable harms, and support Canadians in making informed choices about alcohol consumption.

Thank you for your leadership on this important public health issue. We look forward to continued collaboration across public health units to advance evidence-based policy that protects and promotes the health of our communities.

Sincerely,



Doug Lawrance
Chair, Board of Health
Northwestern Health Unit



Dr. Kit Young Hoon
Medical Officer of Health
Northwestern Health Unit



Marilyn Herbacz
Chief Executive Officer
Northwestern Health Unit

Copies too:

Board of Health for the Middlesex-London Health Unit

Board of Health for the Northwestern Health Unit

The Honourable Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler, Senator

The Honourable Dawn Arnold, Senator

The Honourable Victor Boudreau, Senator

The Honourable Patrick Brazeau, Senator

The Honourable Sharon Burey, Senator

The Honourable Margo Greenwood, Senator

The Honourable Katherine Hay, Senator

The Honourable Marty Klyne, Senator

The Honourable Marilou McPhedran, Senator

The Honourable Tracy Muggli, Senator

The Honourable Chantal Petitclerc, Senator

The Honourable Paulette Senior, Senator

Eric Melillo, Member of Parliament for Kenora-Kiiwetinoong

Marcus Powlowski, Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Rainy River

The Honourable Greg Rickford, Member of Provincial Parliament for Kenora-Rainy River

The Honourable Kevin Holland, Member of Provincial Parliament for Thunder Bay-Atikokan

Sol Mamakwa, Member of Provincial Parliament for Kiiwetinoong

Northwestern Health Unit local municipalities

Ontario Boards of Health

Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa)