

June 25, 2026

SENT ELECTRONICALLY

Dear Member Municipalities,

**Re: Health Impacts of “Bring-Your-Own” Alcohol at Outdoor Public Events in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts**

On behalf of the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (NBPSDHU), we are writing to share a resolution #BOH/06/05, passed at its meeting on June 24, 2026, regarding the public health impacts of permitting “bring-your-own” (BYO) alcohol at outdoor public events.

The Board of Health calls upon municipalities within the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts region to promote community safety and well-being by not permitting BYO alcohol permits. Municipalities are not required to designate any events as eligible for BYO alcohol under the provincial framework.

In March 2026, the [Government of Ontario](#) announced that municipalities may permit BYO alcoholic beverages at qualifying outdoor public events, subject to the passage of a municipal by-law and designation as a cultural or community event. In response, Board of Health is providing the attached **Appendix A**, which outlines key public health considerations related to health, equity, economics, community safety, and municipal liability, as well as evidence-based strategies to reduce alcohol-related harms.

At its meeting on June 24, 2026, the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit passed resolution #BOH/06/05.

**Whereas**, the Ontario Public Health Standards require public health units to address substance use and prevent injury through evidence-based health promotion approaches; and

**Whereas**, alcohol is a leading risk factor for injury, chronic disease, disability, and premature death, and contributes to significant healthcare and societal costs; and

**Whereas**, increased availability and visibility of alcohol is associated with increased consumption, normalization of use, and higher rates of alcohol-related harm, particularly among youth and vulnerable populations; and

**Whereas**, alcohol-related harms in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts exceed provincial averages and place significant pressure on healthcare systems, emergency services, and municipal resources; and

**Whereas**, municipalities play a key role in shaping local alcohol environments through bylaws and policies and can implement evidence-informed strategies to reduce alcohol-related harms; and

**Whereas**, permitting BYO alcohol events may increase municipal liability, enforcement demands, and risks to community safety without strong controls and adequate capacity;

**Therefore Be It Resolved That,** the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit recommend that municipalities within the district not permit Bring-Your-Own alcohol events as part of their municipal alcohol policies.

**Be It Further Resolved That,** the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit encourage municipalities to adopt, strengthen, or maintain evidence-informed Municipal Alcohol Policies that limit alcohol availability and prioritize health, safety, and community well-being.

**Be It Further Resolved That,** the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit support continued collaboration with municipal partners by providing public health expertise, local data, and guidance on alcohol-related harms and policy development.

**Be It Further Resolved That,** where a municipality elects to allow Bring-Your-Own alcohol event permits, the Board of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit asks that approvals be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and consider the following safeguards:

- i. Exclude family-focused or youth-focussed events where children and youth may be present;
- ii. Restrict locations primarily frequented by children and youth including playgrounds, sports fields, splash pads, skateboard and BMX parks, libraries, and schools, as well as locations that present inherent safety risks, including outdoor pools, natural or outdoor ice rinks, and other bodies of water.
- iii. Exclude events where alcohol use would reasonably increase nuisance, risk, or inequity.

**Be It Further Resolved That,** copies of this resolution be forwarded to Member Municipalities, Ontario Boards of Health, Victor Fedeli, MPP, Nipissing, Graydon Smith, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka, John Vanthof, MPP, Timiskaming-Cochrane, the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, North Bay Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police Detachments of North Bay, West Parry Sound, and Almaguin Highlands, Canadian Mental Health Association North Bay & Area, Canadian Mental Health Association Muskoka-Parry Sound, North Bay Regional Health Centre, West Nipissing General Hospital, Mattawa General Hospital, West Parry Sound Community Health Centre, Hands The Family Help Network, Children’s Aid Society Nipissing and Parry Sound.

Evidence-informed municipal alcohol policies are an effective and cost-efficient way to reduce alcohol-related harms. Municipalities play a critical role in shaping local alcohol environments and can support healthier communities through proactive, balanced approaches that consider health, safety, and economic factors.

NBPSDHU is committed to supporting municipal partners in this work. Staff are available to provide guidance, assist with the development or enhancement of Municipal Alcohol Policies and by-laws, and provide public health expertise related to alcohol-related harms and policy development.



We appreciate your ongoing commitment to community safety and well-being and look forward to continued collaboration.

For further information, please contact Louise Gagne, Executive Director, Community Services at [louise.gagne@healthunit.ca](mailto:louise.gagne@healthunit.ca) or Sandee Guindon, Manager, Community Health at [sandee.guindon@healthunit.ca](mailto:sandee.guindon@healthunit.ca).

Sincerely,

  
[Rick Champagne \(Jun 25, 2026 14:33:08 EDT\)](#)

Rick Champagne  
Chairperson, Board of Health

*Carol Zimbalatti*

Dr. Carol Zimbalatti, CCFP, MPH  
Medical Officer of Health/Executive Officer

Encl. (1)

Copy to:

Ontario Boards of Health  
Victor Fedeli, MPP, Nipissing  
Graydon Smith, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka  
John Vanthof, MPP, Timiskaming-Cochrane  
Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
North Bay Police Service  
Ontario Provincial Police Detachments – North Bay, West Parry Sound, and Almaguin Highlands  
Canadian Mental Health Association North Bay & Area  
Canadian Mental Health Association Muskoka-Parry Sound  
North Bay Regional Health Centre  
West Nipissing General Hospital  
Mattawa General Hospital  
West Parry Sound Community Health Centre  
Hands The Family Help Network  
Children's Aid Society Nipissing and Parry Sound

## Appendix A.

### Key Findings

- Alcohol use is responsible for approximately 806 emergency department visits and 360 hospitalizations annually in Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts.<sup>26,27,28</sup>
- Alcohol harms affect all neighbourhoods, but have a greater impact on people living in neighbourhoods with the greatest economic and social disadvantage.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2025, Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts had 130 retail alcohol outlets.<sup>3,25</sup> This equals a density of 11.2 retailers for every 10,000 residents aged 15 years and older.<sup>4,25</sup> This is more than 4 times higher than the provincial off-premise alcohol retail outlet density of 2.5 for every 10,000 residents aged 15 years and older.<sup>4,25</sup>
- Reducing alcohol-related harms can also help alleviate pressures on municipal services, including policing, paramedic services, by-law enforcement, parks operations, and risk management. Although most alcohol-related revenue flows to the province, many of the resulting social and financial costs are borne at the local level.<sup>6,8,9</sup>

### About This Work

This resource provides municipalities with current, locally relevant information on alcohol-related harms and alcohol availability within the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts. Its purpose is to inform and support municipal decision-making regarding Ontario's permitting of "bring-your-own" (BYO) alcoholic beverages at outdoor public events.

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (NBPSDHU) has a long-standing partnership with local municipalities, offering health data and policy expertise to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of effective municipal alcohol policies.

Alcohol availability, consumption, and related harms have direct impacts on a range of municipal services, including policing, paramedic services, by-law enforcement, fire services, and parks and recreation.

Municipalities also bear significant financial and operational burdens associated with alcohol-related injuries, disturbances, and property damage. A clear understanding of the local alcohol environment enables municipalities to make informed decisions that protect public safety, promote community well-being, and manage municipal resources effectively.

# Background

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in Ontario and places a greater burden on the healthcare system and other social services than all other substances, including commercial tobacco and opioids. Alcohol-related harm represents a significant public health concern, as a substantial portion of the population consumes alcohol at levels that exceed low-risk guidelines, increasing the likelihood of chronic disease, injury, and premature death. These harms are not experienced equally; certain demographic and socioeconomic groups face disproportionately higher impacts.

In recent years, alcohol regulations in Ontario have been progressively relaxed. These changes have expanded retail access and permitted municipalities to allow personal alcohol consumption in public spaces, such as parks. As a result, the overall environment has become more conducive to alcohol use, increasing both demand and the potential for related harms.

Evidence consistently demonstrates that greater availability of alcohol leads to increased consumption and, in turn, higher rates of alcohol-related harm. Drinking in public spaces also contributes to the normalization of alcohol use. Increased visibility can influence social norms and raise the likelihood that children and youth will begin using alcohol. Alcohol use during adolescence can interfere with critical brain development, particularly in areas responsible for memory, decision-making, and impulse control. Delaying the initiation of alcohol use is one of the most effective ways to support healthy brain development, with the greatest risks observed among youth under the age of 15.

Alcohol use also has significant economic impacts at both the provincial and municipal levels. In Ontario, alcohol generated \$5.2 billion in net revenue in 2020; however, the total economic cost – including health care, lost productivity, criminal justice, and other direct expenses – reached \$7.1 billion, resulting in a net deficit of \$1.9 billion.

At the municipal level, alcohol use is associated with increased service demands, higher operational costs, and greater liability risks on municipal properties. It can also place added pressure on insurance coverage and premiums. These financial and operational impacts may increase further if municipal alcohol policies become less restrictive.

## What We Know

### People in Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts experience substantial harms related to alcohol use

- Each year in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts, alcohol use is responsible for approximately 806 emergency department visits, and 360 hospitalizations.<sup>26,27,28</sup>
- Between 2021 and 2024, crude rates of alcohol-impaired driving charges among adults aged 18 and over were substantially higher in several local areas compared to Ontario



overall. Rates were approximately 2.6 times higher in Parry Sound, 6.2 times higher in rural North Bay, and 3.3 times higher in rural Parry Sound on average per 100,000 population.<sup>31</sup>

- Alcohol consumption causes approximately 4,330 deaths, 22,009 hospitalizations and 194,692 emergency department visits in Ontario.<sup>29</sup>
- Rates of alcohol-related hospitalizations, and emergency department visits in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts are significantly higher than provincial averages.<sup>1</sup>
- Harms related to alcohol use are not evenly distributed. Men experience a higher burden of alcohol-related injury, illness, and death compared to women.<sup>1</sup>

### **Alcohol related harms in Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts have greater impact on those living in lower resources areas.**

- Rates of alcohol-related deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits are approximately twice as high among individuals living in neighbourhoods with the greatest levels of economic and social disadvantage compared to those in the least disadvantaged areas.<sup>1,2</sup>
- A large proportion of second-hand harms from alcohol occur in public places because there are typically a higher number of people around who have been drinking.<sup>14</sup>
- Drinking outdoors is associated with increased harms from other peoples' drinking, such as verbal abuse, serious arguments or physical harms, particularly for women, young people and other vulnerable groups.<sup>14</sup>
- People with lower socioeconomic status (SES) also experience higher levels of alcohol-related harms, including second-hand harms, even though they are less likely to drink and consume less alcohol overall.<sup>14</sup>

### **Alcohol availability and use in Nipissing-Parry Sound District**

- As of December 2025, there were 130 retailers in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts licensed to sell alcoholic beverages. More than three-quarters of these outlets are grocery and convenience stores.<sup>3,25</sup> This represents a density of 11.2 retailers per 10,000 residents aged 15 years and older—approximately four times higher than the recommended best-practice density.<sup>4,25</sup>
- Alcohol use is also widespread in the region. More than 79% of adults in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts reported consuming alcohol in the past year, a rate statistically higher than the provincial average of 73%.<sup>30</sup>
- In addition, approximately one in three adults consumes more than two drinks per week, exceeding recommended low-risk drinking guidelines and increasing the likelihood of alcohol-related harms.<sup>5,10,30</sup>
- Between 2023 and 2024, 20% of individuals aged 19 and older in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts self-reported as high-risk drinkers, defined as consuming seven or more drinks per week. This rate is significantly higher than the provincial average of 13.8%.<sup>30</sup>

## **What's Next**

The most effective and cost-efficient approaches to reducing alcohol-related harms are policies that limit alcohol availability and exposure.<sup>6,7</sup> Local alcohol policies that maintain these limits can influence community-wide drinking patterns, reduce associated harms, and help protect municipalities from rising costs and liability risks. Municipalities must balance economic development with health and safety considerations, enforcement

capacity and community expectations.. As such, they play a critical role in determining local strategies that reflect the unique needs and priorities of their communities, including addressing local alcohol-related harms.

### Municipal actions that reduce alcohol-related harms include:

- Maintaining alcohol-free spaces such as parks, beaches, trails, recreation areas, and community events<sup>6</sup>
- Applying risk-based permitting approaches for alcohol sales at events<sup>4,7</sup>
- Establishing clear and consistent municipal alcohol bylaws and policies<sup>4,7,9</sup>
- Setting limits on when and where alcohol is permitted at community events<sup>4,7</sup>
- Supporting enforcement in public spaces<sup>4,7,9</sup>

Municipal staff and elected officials are encouraged to contact the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit for support in reviewing alcohol policies and to discuss decisions related to Ontario’s permitting of “bring-your-own” alcoholic beverages at outdoor public events.

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# “Bring-Your-Own” Alcohol at Outdoor Public Events

As municipalities move forward in the decision-making process in regard to Bring-Your-Own alcohol announcement, the following information outlines health and safety considerations before permitting these events in your community.

Sections include guidance for the following decision-points for municipalities:

- Before allowing the BYO permit process in your municipality.
- If/when developing criteria for BYO permits.
- If/when administering and implementing BYO permits.

*Please note that the guidance provided is not intended to be a substitute for professional legal and liability advice.*

## Considerations Before Allowing the BYO Permit Process in Your Municipality

Allowing BYO alcohol at public events may increase municipal liability unless strong governance, safety controls, enforcement and insurance requirements are in place. <sup>(16)</sup>

Considerations:

- Obtain legal and insurance advice. <sup>(14,16)</sup>
- Carefully assess local readiness, including consulting with local alcohol/drug strategies, emergency services, enforcement and community safety and well-being partnerships. <sup>(16)</sup>
- Review and align existing internal processes, event permit frameworks, and Municipal Alcohol Policies (MAPs). <sup>(16)</sup>
- Assess whether existing staffing, enforcement capacity and cost recovery mechanisms are adequate to support BYO events (e.g., paid duty or dedicated security requirements). <sup>(16)</sup>
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan using multiple data sources, and ongoing public input. <sup>(14)</sup>
- Clarify the requirements and responsibilities of permit holders within new/revised bylaws (e.g., Smart Serve trained persons onsite at all times). <sup>(16,17)</sup>
- Review the [Alcohol Gaming Commission of Ontario \(AGCO\) Guidelines](#). <sup>(17)</sup>

## Considerations for Developing Criteria for BYO Permits

Define community and cultural events for BYO permits intentionally.

Municipal definitions should:

- Ensure definitions align with community safety and well-being goals.
- Exclude family-focused events where children and youth may be present, and at locations primarily frequented by children (e.g. playgrounds, sports fields, splash pads, libraries, and schools). <sup>(14,16,18)</sup>
- Include only locations with demonstrated relative safety and suitability for alcohol consumption (see below).

Set criteria for BYO permits that meet municipal requirements to support health, safety, and wellbeing.

BYO permits should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, rather than through blanket approvals and should avoid creating cultural or safety barriers for non-drinkers. <sup>(16)</sup>

Criteria:

- Restrict locations such as:
  - Child-related environments: playgrounds, wading pools, splash pads, or skateboard and BMX parks, etc. <sup>(14,16,18)</sup>
  - Inherently unsafe environments: outdoor pools, natural or outdoor ice rinks, other bodies of water, etc. <sup>(14,18)</sup>
  - In conjunction with higher risk activities. <sup>(14)</sup>
  - Exclude events where alcohol use would reasonably increase nuisance, risk, or inequity. <sup>(14,16,19)</sup>
  - Restrict hours for when the event can take place. <sup>(13,14,19)</sup>
  - Require locations to have access to drinking water, washrooms, garbage, recycling, and public transportation, if available. <sup>(14,18)</sup>

*This document was created in collaboration with public health units from the Ontario Municipal Alcohol Policy Working Group.*



## Considerations for Administering and Implementing BYO Permits

|                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Apply a risk reduction approach.</p>                 | <p>Consider incorporating the following risk reduction strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrict where alcohol can be consumed within the permit. Designate separate areas where alcohol can be consumed and maintain substantial alcohol-free areas with a physical barrier and signage. Ensure equal enjoyment of the event by all members, drinking and non-drinking. <sup>(16,17)</sup></li> <li>• Only allow 19+ years in designated drinking areas. <sup>(17)</sup></li> <li>• Prohibit glass alcohol bottles to prevent injury from broken containers. <sup>(14,17)</sup></li> <li>• Require food and non-alcoholic beverages to be available for purchase. <sup>(12,20,21)</sup></li> <li>• Require personal consumption limits consistent with Ontario regulations intended to prevent intoxication and over-service at events. <sup>(12,16,20,21,22,23)</sup></li> <li>• Enforce a zero-tolerance standard for disorderly conduct, public intoxication, and underage drinking. <sup>(16,21)</sup></li> <li>• Establish an emergency response plan, including procedures for intoxication, injury, and crowd management.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Conduct comprehensive monitoring and evaluation.</p> | <p>Monitor and evaluate community harms and costs (e.g., public safety/security, liability, trash collection, signage, and/or employee time). <sup>(14)</sup></p> <p>Consider post-event reports and compliance reviews to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address complaints and incidents. <sup>(16)</sup></li> <li>• Assess enforcement effectiveness. <sup>(16)</sup></li> <li>• Inform future event approvals and policy adjustments. <sup>(16)</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |



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