1 May 2007

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty,
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen’s Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

**Re: Bill 68—Highway Traffic Act Amendment (Mobile Phones) 2006**

On 25 April 2007, the Board of Health for Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington passed the following motion:

That the KFL&A Board of Health write to the Premier of Ontario, supporting Bill 68, strengthening the Highway Traffic Act by prohibiting mobile phone use while driving.

This decision was made based on the mounting evidence that mobile phone use while driving increases the incidence of motor vehicle collisions, and the injuries and deaths that result from them.

Mobile communications are part of everyday life, providing a means of keeping in touch with family and friends, as well as enabling work activities. Unfortunately, research shows that 85 percent of mobile phone owners use their phones while driving (Stayer et al, 2003).

Mobile phones create driver distraction and increase the risk of injury and death. Drivers are four times more likely to have a motor vehicle collision when using a mobile telephone than when not, a risk similar to driving with a blood alcohol level at the legal limit (Redelmeier & Tibshirani, 2001). In fact, mobile phone users may exhibit greater impairments than intoxicated drivers, with hands-free mobile phones showing no improvement in impairment over hand-held mobile phones (Stayer, Drews & Couch, 2003).

Unfortunately, public education on the dangers of mobile phone use is not sufficient to have people refrain from mobile-phone use while driving. In a recent poll, 60 percent of drivers indicated that they would not stop using mobile phones when driving even when told that their mobile phone use makes them four times more likely to be involved in a collision (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2007). Research subjects commented that they had observed others driving erratically while using a mobile phone but thought mobile-phone use rarely affected their driving, showing a disparity between self-perception and their actual driving performance (Strayer, Drews & Johnston, 2003).
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It has been argued that using mobile phones and other telecommunications while driving are necessary in today’s economy and a ban would result in economic losses (Hahn et al 2000). Yet when an Oakville company, AMEC, the international project management and engineering company, banned employees from using wireless devices while driving during work, they did not experience a decrease in productivity (Douglas, 2006). Other arguments against mobile phone legislation are that such a law would be difficult to enforce and that laws prohibiting careless driving already exist. According to the Ontario Provincial Police; however, it would be easier to control if there were a specific law prohibiting mobile phone use rather than having to prove careless driving as a result of using a mobile phone (Chai, 2006).

In closing, we urge your government and indeed all the members of our provincial parliament to consider the evidence and support Bill 68 in order to enhance your government’s efforts to improve road safety and to reduce motor vehicle-related injuries and deaths in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Beth Pater, Chair  
KFL&A Board of Health

cc: Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health & Long Care  
Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion  
Honourable Donna Cansfield, Minister of Transportation  
Dr. George Pasut, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Members of Provincial Parliament  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA)  
Ontario Boards of Health