

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

TORONTO - The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) is extending hearty congratulations to the Ontario government today following the announcement of a \$50M investment to support the core elements of the Smoke Free Ontario campaign.

“Ontario’s public health community has been on the leading edge of the fight against tobacco for many years now. A provincial government has joined us on that leading edge for the first time, and it is to be congratulated”, said alPHa President Larry O’Connor. “It is one thing to pass laws and make speeches, but without the dollars to back them up, their goals can be very difficult to reach. Today’s announcement demonstrates that the Smoke Free Ontario strategy is being taken very seriously.”

alPHa’s members have long been the community leaders in implementing tobacco prevention and protection programs, and have done significant amounts of work in their communities as well as advocacy through alPHa to reduce or eliminate exposure to the health hazards posed by second-hand smoke. In the years leading up to this announcement, many local communities, under the leadership of their boards of health, have passed bylaws to protect their citizens from this danger. Doing so has presented enormous challenges, as getting these bylaws passed often required concessions to tenuous economic arguments at the expense of more comprehensive health protection measures.

The Smoke Free Ontario strategy contains several approaches to reducing tobacco use, including youth prevention and cessation programs, public awareness of protection, prevention and cessation through mass media, and expanded tobacco control programs through the public health units. Ontario’s health units were identified early on as lead agencies for enforcement and an array of health promotion activities under the strategy, and a specific sum of \$7.7M has been committed to support them.

alPHa is delighted that Ontario’s government has delivered on its promise of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy, and looks forward to assisting in its implementation in order to reduce the enormous toll that tobacco takes on tens of thousands of Ontarians each year.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.alphaweb.org/tobacco.asp>, <http://www.alphaweb.org/news.asp?nid=44> or browse through the online library at <http://www.alphaweb.org/library.asp> (choose “tobacco” from the issue menu).

*As the provincial organization representing public health, alPHa provides leadership and expertise on public health management issues. Its members include medical officers of health, board of health members and senior managers in public health disciplines including inspection, epidemiology, nursing, dentistry, nutrition, health promotion and business administration.*

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