

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TORONTO - The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) is extending its congratulations to the Ontario government today following the passing Bill 164, the Smoke Free Ontario Act into law.

“We are thrilled that the vast majority of our provincially elected representatives, regardless of party affiliation stood up for the health of Ontarians yesterday”, said alPHa President Larry O’Connor. “This is very strong legislation – certainly stronger than anything the public health community and tobacco control advocates would have expected after so many years without any serious provincial commitment.”

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. Getting these bylaws passed often required concessions to tenuous economic arguments at the expense of more comprehensive health protection measures, and some made more concessions than others. The Smoke Free Ontario Act will eliminate the disparities and protect all Ontarians equally from a proven and significant health hazard.

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 of this new legislation.

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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For more information regarding this release, contact Gordon Fleming, Manager, Public Health Issues, at 416-595-0006, ext 23 e-mail gordon@alphaweb.org