



May 30, 2011

Lorraine Fry and Andrea Kita, Co-chairs  
Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies  
c/o Ontario Lung Association  
573 King Street East  
Toronto ON M5A 4L3

Dear Ms. Fry and Kita:

**Re: Call for Action Against Smoking in Movies**

On May 20, 2011 at a regular meeting of the Board for the Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Board considered the attached correspondence from Middlesex London Health Unit and Peterborough County-City Health Unit regarding smoking in movies. The following motion was passed:

Motion No: 2011-49

Moved by: Kevin Eccles

Seconded by: Bob Pringle

**THAT, the Board of Health support the recommendations from the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-free Movies' aimed at reducing exposure of youth to smoking in movies as referenced by Middlesex London Health Unit and Peterborough County-City Health Unit.**

Carried.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by:*

Hazel Lynn MD, FCFP, MHSc  
Medical Officer of Health

Cc: All Ontario Boards of Health

Encl.



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Graham L. Pollett, MD, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2011 April 14

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## CALL FOR ACTION AGAINST SMOKING IN MOVIES

### **Recommendation**

#### *It is recommended:*

1. *That the Board of Health endorse the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-free Movies policies highlighted in Appendix A to Report No. 036-11; and further,*
2. *That the Board of Health communicate its support for policy actions to reduce the impact of smoking in movies on youth to local MPPs and other Boards of Health in Ontario.*

### **Background**

The Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies was formed in May 2010 to take collective action to counter the harmful impact of smoking in movies. Members of the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-free Movies include the Canadian Cancer Society - Ontario Division, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Non-Smokers' Rights Association/Smoking and Health Action Foundation, Ontario Lung Association, Ottawa Public Health Exposé, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, Program Training and Consultation Centre Media Network and Ontario Tobacco Control Area Networks (TCAN). The Middlesex-London Health Unit is the host of the southwest TCAN.

Research has shown that the more youth see smoking in movies, the more likely they are to start. In 2009, Canadian theatres delivered over 1.1 billion tobacco impressions in youth-rated films alone. It is important to note that since movies are also viewed on DVD and Blue-ray, video-on-demand, cable, satellite, broadcast and broadband media, 1.1 billion underestimates the total tobacco impressions viewed in youth-rated films.

### **Immediate Action is Required**

Tobacco imagery in movies and in video games is a powerful vehicle for promoting tobacco. Since the November 1998 Master Settlement Agreement in the United States, attention has been drawn to the links between Hollywood and the Tobacco Industry, including evidence of payments for tobacco product placement in movies and industry files that show the role of movies in tobacco promotion. One letter states: "Film is better than any commercial that has been run on television or in any magazine, because the audience is totally unaware of any sponsor involvement."

Extensive research on the effects of smoking and other tobacco portrayals in films demonstrates a relationship between smoking in the movies and youth tobacco initiation. According to the Tobacco Vector Report, created by the Physicians for a Smoke-free Canada, latest research suggests 44% of the estimated 300,000 Canadian teens who smoke, first lit up because they saw a character smoking in a film (about 130,000 of youth 15-19). Since provincial rating agencies (Ontario Film Review Board) seldom apply adult ratings (18A) to top-grossing films rated "R" in the United States, Ontario children and youth are exposed to an estimated 60 percent more tobacco imagery than their US counterparts. This influence

is compounded by the fact that generally smoking is glamorized on film, and rarely are the negative health effects of using tobacco products shown.

Recent data on youth and young adult tobacco-use rates suggest that declines in tobacco use have halted. According to the 2009 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 16% of youth in grades 9 to 12 in southwestern Ontario reported past year cigarette smoking, and 7.5% reported daily smoking.

### **Call for Action**

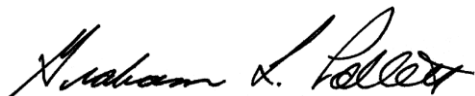
The Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies is calling for health organizations and agencies that work with children and youth to endorse the policies outlined on page two of Appendix A to reduce youth exposure to on-screen smoking and impressions of tobacco.

### **Conclusion**

Tobacco use remains the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. Smoking in movies challenges Ontario's tobacco control efforts. Tobacco imagery in movies, particularly films rated as suitable for children and adolescents, promotes tobacco use and normalizes tobacco products to youth. Endorsement of the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-free Movies policy actions would help to prevent young people from starting to use tobacco products.

The Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies encourages Board of Health members, public health professionals, parents and education leaders to visit [www.smokefreemovies.ca](http://www.smokefreemovies.ca) to learn more and contribute to this movement.

This report was prepared by Ms. Amy Yateman, Health Promoter, and Ms. Linda Stobo, Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention and Tobacco Control Team. Ms. Stobo will be present at the April 14 Board of Health meeting to answer any questions.



Graham L. Pollett, MD, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

<p><b>This report addresses</b> the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Comprehensive Tobacco Control; 1, 7, 11</p>
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May 4, 2011

Lorraine Fry & Andrea Kita, Co-chairs  
Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies  
c/o Ontario Lung Association  
573 King Street East  
Toronto, ON  
M5A 4L3

Dear Ms. Fry and Kita:

I am pleased to inform you that at its April 13, 2011 meeting, the Board of Health for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit considered a staff report on Smoke-free Movies and passed the following resolution:

“That the Board of Health send a letter to the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies supporting all five of their recommendations for policy changes aimed at reducing exposure of youth to smoking in movies.”

Peterborough County-City Health Unit supports the Coalition’s five recommendations and we thank you for your leadership on this front. We were very pleased that the local media (radio, TV and print) responded with some coverage of this decision. I have attached our press release for your information.

We look forward to a positive response from the key decision-makers within the film classification agencies as well as our political leaders.

Yours in health,

**Original signed by**

Andy Sharpe  
Chair, Board of Health  
for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit

Encls.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Wednesday, April 13, 2011, Peterborough

## **Health Unit Pushes to Butt Out Smoking in Movies**

### ***Board of Health Endorses Policy Recommendations by the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies***

The Peterborough County-City Board of Health endorsed five policy recommendations to reduce exposure of youth to smoking in movies at tonight's board meeting.

"There is abundant scientific evidence that links exposure to smoking in movies and youth smoking initiation," said Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health for the Health Unit. "We know tobacco imagery pervades youth entertainment choices and that this is one reason why local youth start smoking. The board's advocacy of smoke-free movies reflects their commitment to address this serious health issue at all levels because they understand our youth are affected by cultural influences that come from beyond our borders."

The five policy recommendations endorsed by the Board of Health were developed by the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies and call for the following changes to the provincial movie industry:

1. Rate new movies with smoking 18A in Ontario, with the sole exceptions being when the tobacco presentation clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use or is necessary to represent smoking of a real historical figure.
2. Require producers to certify on-screen that no one involved in the production of the movie received anything of value in consideration for using or displaying tobacco.
3. Require strong anti-smoking ads to be shown before any movie with tobacco use at the distributor's expense, regardless of rating and distribution channel.
4. Require producers to stop identifying tobacco brands.
5. Require that films with tobacco imagery assigned a G, PG or 14A rating be ineligible for federal and provincial film subsidies.

To date, at least 12 Ontario health units have sent letters of endorsement to the Coalition.

*continued...*

## Communications Office

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### Quick Facts:

- Film ratings directly affect the amount of exposure to tobacco in films that young people receive.
- In Canada, the majority of films released in 2009 were youth-rated, and 1.117 billion tobacco impressions were delivered in G/PG/14A films in theatres. The number of tobacco impressions is calculated by multiplying the number of tobacco incidents per film by the number of paid admissions per film.
- While reports of in-theatre tobacco depictions represent an index of exposure, they underestimate the total tobacco impressions delivered, since films are also viewed on DVD and Blu-ray™, video-on-demand, cable, satellite, and broadcast and broadband media.
- Although most movies viewed in Canada are produced by U.S. companies, the number of youth-rated films with tobacco depictions shown in theatres is higher in Canada than the U.S. because provincial film boards classify more movies as 14A or PG that are rated R in the U.S.
- In 2009, 125 of the 145 movies with tobacco released in Canadian theatres were youth-rated films (G, PG, 14A) delivering more than two-thirds (68%) of all in theatre tobacco impressions.

To download the Health Unit's staff report on smoke-free movies, visit [www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca) or click on [www.smokefreemovies.ca](http://www.smokefreemovies.ca) for more information.

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### For further information, please contact:

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