



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

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

DATE: 2011 April 14

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

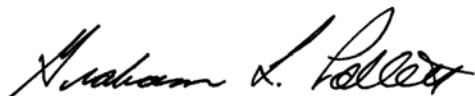
The Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies is calling for health organizations and agencies that work with children and youth to endorse the policies outlined on page two of Appendix A to reduce youth exposure to on-screen smoking and impressions of tobacco.

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 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.



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Medical Officer of Health

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