

July 23, 2018

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON, M7A 1A1

Delivered via email

Dear Premier Ford,

RE: Pause in Implementation of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017

At a special meeting of the Chatham-Kent Board of Health on July 16, 2018, the Board received a staff presentation (attached) regarding the pause of the implementation of the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* (SFOA, 2017). The Board felt there was significant evidence presented to raise concerns over the provincial government's pause of this important legislation.

While gains have been made in tobacco control, and the rate of smoking is declining, tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. According to the [Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms Study](#) released in June 2018, substance use costs the Canadian economy \$38.4 billion, or almost \$1,100 for every person in Canada, with tobacco use alone contributing to 31.2% (\$12.0 billion) of these costs, second only to alcohol (\$14.6 billion or 38.1%).

The healthcare burden associated with tobacco remains high; in 2014, substance use-related healthcare costs amounted to \$11.1 billion in Canada, with tobacco use contributing to 53.1% (\$5.9 billion) of these costs.

It is understood that the delayed implementation of the SFOA, 2017 is because the government wishes to review the new regulations related to vaping and how e-cigarettes could be used as a cessation tool. Although more research needs to be done to understand the long-term effects of e-cigarette use, a recently published (2018) comprehensive evidence review by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine concluded the following:

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- The effectiveness of e-cigarettes as a cessation aid for smokers is unclear.
- E-cigarette use is associated with subsequent cigarette smoking among youth.
- While chemical levels of second-hand exposure from e-cigarettes are lower than that of combustible tobacco cigarettes, this exposure could have the potential to lead to adverse health effects.

From these findings, it cannot be assumed that e-cigarettes are harmless. The modernized legislation would protect Ontarians from second hand smoke and vapour, and regulate not only the sale, supply, use, display, and promotion of tobacco and vapour products, but also the smoking of medicinal cannabis. These are important policy measures to reduce tobacco use to 5% by 2035 and protect the health of Ontarians, especially vulnerable populations, including youth. It is critical that any policy framework that allows vaping as a cessation tool include safeguards to prevent youth uptake.

The Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit and the Chatham-Kent Board of Health look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Ontario government to protect Ontarians from the effects of tobacco, vapour, and cannabis. We urge the government to reconsider implementing the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* as intended and without delay so that all Ontarians are able to live, learn, work, and play in the healthiest environment possible.

The public health community looks forward to the opportunity to share their expertise and experience, working together under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to create a healthier, more productive population with enhanced quality of life and reduced health care costs.

Sincerely,



Joe Faas
Chair,
Chatham-Kent Board of Health

Attachment

c: Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Monte McNaughton, MPP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex
Rick Nicholls, MPP, Chatham-Kent – Leamington
Ontario Boards of Health