

alPHA's members are
the public health units
in Ontario.

alPHA Sections:

Boards of Health
Section

Council of Ontario
Medical Officers of
Health (COMOH)

Affiliate

Organizations:

Association of Ontario
Public Health Business
Administrators

Association of
Public Health
Epidemiologists
in Ontario

Association of
Supervisors of Public
Health Inspectors of
Ontario

Health Promotion
Ontario

Ontario Association of
Public Health Dentistry

Ontario Association of
Public Health Nursing
Leaders

Ontario Society of
Nutrition Professionals
in Public Health

April 12 2017

Hon. Jane Philpott
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Philpott,

Re. Seizing the Opportunity: The Future of Tobacco Control in Canada

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA), I am writing to congratulate you on the release of your plan to modernize the federal approach to tobacco control and the reduction of its associated preventable illness and death.

We are especially pleased with your choice to set an "aggressive prevalence target" of reducing tobacco use in Canada to less than 5% by 2035. As noted in the preamble of your report, 37,000 Canadians die from smoking-related illnesses, with a \$17 billion combined impact on health expenditures and indirect economic costs each year. We therefore agree that an aggressive target is warranted.

In June of 2013, the alPHA membership referred a proposed resolution to ban the sale and distribution of tobacco products in Ontario by 2030 to the alPHA Board of Directors for further examination. In September 2013, the alPHA Board of Directors moved to support the vision of a tobacco-free Ontario and to support in principle activities that contribute to the realization of this vision.

Since that time, we have had the opportunity to review the evidence behind some of the available tobacco control measures, having recognized that our significant successes on the tobacco front over the past half-century have been incremental. The most promising of these appear to be plain packaging, significant tax increases and raising the minimum legal purchase age.

With the first of these already initiated at the federal level and the second an already-available tool for governments across the country, our members supported a resolution in 2015 (attached) to raise the minimum legal purchase age to 21. We have seen evidence suggesting that this will have a significant impact on reducing youth-initiation rates, which is one of the most important tobacco control measures we can take.

The modernization of the federal approach to tobacco control is indeed an important opportunity for improving the overall health of Canadians, and we look forward to examining and contributing to other policy opportunities that arise as part of the new federal strategy in order to help you realize and hopefully exceed your aggressive tobacco reduction targets in the coming years.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaeger'.

Dr. Valerie Jaeger
alPHa President

COPY: Hon. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Ontario)
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Ontario)
Roselle Martino, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health and Long-Term Care, Population and
Public Health Division (Ontario)

ENCL.

alPHa RESOLUTION A15-7

TITLE: Increasing the Minimum Legal Age for Access to Tobacco Products in Ontario to 21

SPONSOR: alPHa Board of Directors

WHEREAS more than 13,000 people die in Ontario from tobacco-related diseases every year, making it the number one cause of death and disease in Ontario; and

WHEREAS scientific studies have concluded that cigarette smoking causes chronic lung disease, coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer of the lungs, larynx, esophagus, mouth, and bladder, and contributes to cancer of the cervix, pancreas, and kidneys; and

WHEREAS The Ontario Government estimates that tobacco-related disease costs Ontario's health care system an estimated \$2.2 billion in direct health care costs and an additional \$5.3 billion in indirect costs such as time off work each year; and

WHEREAS the age of initiation for tobacco use has been identified as a critical factor in determining use in adulthood, with 90% of adults who become daily smokers having reported first use of cigarettes before reaching 19 years of age, and almost 100 percent reporting first use before age 26; and

WHEREAS Smoking prevalence declined rapidly between 2000 and 2009 among Ontarians aged 15-19, from approximately 1 in 4 to less than 1 in 10, but has remained steady in the 6 years since then; and

WHEREAS The U.S. Institute of Medicine (IOM) committee concluded that increasing the MLA for tobacco products from 19 to 21 will likely result in a 15% reduction in initiation rates of tobacco use by adolescents in the 15 to 17 years age group; and

WHEREAS the alPHa Board of Directors supports the vision of a tobacco-free Ontario and further supports activities that contribute to the realization of that vision; and

WHEREAS Ontario law acknowledges the harms of tobacco use by prohibiting the sale or furnishing of cigarettes, tobacco products or smoking paraphernalia to minors; and

WHEREAS The Smoke-Free Ontario Act already prohibits the sale or supply of tobacco to a person who appears to be less than 25 years old unless he or she provides proof of age;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies call on the Ontario Government to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit the sale and supply of tobacco to a person who is less than 21 years old.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Resolution CARRIED