

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