April 2, 2019

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

Dear Premier Ford:

Re: Strengthening SFOA, 2017

On March 20, 2019 the Board of Health of the Perth District Health reviewed correspondence from the Renfrew County and District Health Unit and passed a motion to send a letter regarding strengthening the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 to address the promotion of vaping.

Vaping among youth has increased in the last two years, and e-cigarette use has been found to increase the risk of cigarette use in youth. The Perth District Health unit is concerned that increased exposure to vapour products through display and promotion will lead to further increased vaping and tobacco use in youth, negating the progress made over the last twenty years to de-normalize tobacco use.

While the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 and accompanying regulation included many favourable changes regarding smoking of tobacco, cannabis and vaping of any substances, further strengthening of the Act is needed. The current legislation only bans vaping product displays at retail outlets and does not restrict other types of retail promotion for vaping products at vapour product retailers. This has led to widespread advertising both in and outside of these premises, exposing kids and youth to vapour product marketing. We have seen creative advertisements such as, displays, posters and signs that are affixed to windows, on power walls, hung from ceilings, and attached to the pumps and concrete bollards at gas stations.

We are concerned about the appeal of these vapour products advertisements on children and youth as the sheer magnitude of this advertising can make these products seem socially desirable. The evidence clearly states that non-tobacco users should not start using vapour products; especially youth and young adults. In addition to the risk of e-cigarette use increasing future combustible tobacco use and the known health effects from tobacco, public health is concerned about the detrimental impacts that nicotine exposure can have on the developing brain.

The Perth District Health Unit supports the strengthening of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 to include banning all advertisements at any point of sale location where youth have access. This prohibition should be inclusive of any type of physical or electronic promotion including window and countertop displays, 3D models of vapour products, posters, signs, free-standing advertising (both in-store and outside store premises) and images on convenience store screens.

Sincerely,

Kathy Vassilakos, Chair  
Board of Health
References:
1. Propel Centre for Population Healthy Impact, University of Waterloo. Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey Overview of Results, 1994-2016/17; 2018

MK/mr

c. Randy Pettapiece, MPP Perth Wellington
Ontario Boards of Health