

## Taking the Next Steps for a Smoke-Free Ontario

November 13, 2013

Ontario will introduce legislation and propose regulatory amendments that, if passed, would strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act by further protecting youth from the harmful effects of tobacco. The changes, if passed, would make it harder for youth to obtain tobacco products, make tobacco products less tempting and further limit exposure to second-hand smoke in public areas.

The government will introduce amendments to the Smoke Free Ontario Act that would, if passed:

- Double fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, making Ontario's penalties the highest in Canada.
- Prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products to help prevent kids from starting to smoke and becoming regular smokers.
- Strengthen enforcement authority to test for the use of tobacco in waterpipes in places where the smoking of tobacco is prohibited.
- Clarify that it is prohibited to offer promotional items with the sale of tobacco.

Ontario will also propose to amend to the regulation made under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. The amendments would, if passed:

- Prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sport fields, and on restaurant and bar patios.
- Further restrict smoking on outdoor grounds of hospitals and on specified provincial government properties.
- Prohibit tobacco sales on postsecondary education campuses and specified provincial government properties.

### Reducing Youth Access to Tobacco Products

To prevent children and youth from accessing tobacco products, Ontario is proposing to increase fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, which would make Ontario's penalties the highest in Canada.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would also prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products with certain exemptions for flavours predominately used by adults, such as menthol. Flavoured tobacco products are one of the few remaining ways tobacco companies can market to kids, and many youth start smoking by using flavoured tobacco products.

The province is also proposing a regulatory amendment that would, if passed, make it more difficult for young people to purchase tobacco by prohibiting tobacco sales on post-secondary education campuses.

## **Protecting Ontarians from Exposure to Tobacco Use**

The proposed amendments contain a number of new measures to further restrict smoking and reduce exposure to second-hand smoke.

Children are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke exposure. Studies show that young people living where there are strong tobacco control regulations at restaurants are less likely to become regular smokers than those living in places with weak regulations. That's why the government is proposing to prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sport fields and on uncovered restaurant and bar patios. The proposed amendments would exempt uncovered patios of the Royal Canadian Legion – Ontario Provincial Command.

Many Ontario municipalities have already taken action to restrict smoking in public spaces. Fifty-eight municipalities ban smoking on playgrounds, 45 ban tobacco use on sports and recreational fields, and nine municipalities ban smoking on patios.

The proposed amendments would also further restrict smoking on the outdoor grounds of hospitals and specified provincial government properties, while providing for limited designated smoking areas at the discretion of hospital boards and the government respectively.

In addition, Ontario would improve enforcement to address the indoor use of tobacco in waterpipes in places where the smoking of tobacco is prohibited, such as enclosed public places and workplaces. The amendments, if passed, would give inspectors authority to take samples from waterpipes and test for tobacco content.

## **Progress Already Made**

Since 2005, Ontario has become a national and international leader in tobacco control.

Through the Smoke Free Ontario Act, the government has taken a strong stance in protecting the people of Ontario from second-hand smoke in enclosed public places and workplaces. Further amendments to the Act created additional protections, including protecting kids from exposure to second-hand smoke in motor vehicles as of 2009, and prohibiting the sale of flavoured cigarillos as of 2010.

Ontario's smoking rate fell from 24.5 per cent in 2000 to 19 per cent in 2012, representing 255,000 fewer smokers.