

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2021 January 21

FILM CONTENT INFORMATION ACT, 2020

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 05-21 re: “Film Content Information Act, 2020” be received for information.

Key Points

- In Ontario, on November 5, 2020, legislation was introduced to enact the *Film Content Information Act, 2020*. This was included as part of Schedule 12 to the budget implementation bill, Bill 229, the *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020*.
- There are public health implications to repealing the *Film Classification Act, 2005 (FCA)* and replacing it with the *Film Content Information Act, 2020 (FCIA)*.
- The Health Unit made a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding Bill 229, *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act*
- On December 4, 2020 Schedule 12 was passed at committee unamended
- The Film Content Information Act, 2020 will come into force on June 8, 2021

Background

In Ontario, on November 5, 2020, legislation was introduced to enact the *Film Content Information Act, 2020*. This legislation was included as part of Schedule 12 to the budget implementation bill, Bill 229, the *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020*. This piece of legislation has significant public health consequences, as it will dissolve Ontario’s current movie rating system. In lieu of the rating system, this legislation will establish a voluntary process under which the exhibitors of movies can decide whether film content information should be listed.

Viewing adult content of various types has potential public health implications, and younger audiences may not have the knowledge or ability to protect themselves. For example, from years of research in Ontario, we know that movies have been used as powerful tool for promoting tobacco use. A substantial body of scientific evidence indicates that exposure to smoking in movies is a cause of smoking initiation and progression to regular smoking among youth.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit has been working for many years to protect young people from tobacco impressions in movies. This legislation opens up greater access by youth to adult content of various types, including tobacco use, and eliminates current protections for other harmful imagery such as violence, alcohol and other drugs.

Action Taken

In keeping with past positions of the Board of Health, the Health Unit submitted the appended input to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as comments regarding Bill 229, *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020* Schedule 12. Additionally, the Health Unit's submission was circulated to MOH/AMOHs and Chronic Disease Prevention/Tobacco Managers at all 34 public health units for their consideration. At least ten public health units and two non-governmental organizations made submissions expressing concerns to the Standing Committee.

Legislation Moving Forward

Schedule 12 was passed without amendments on December 4, 2020. As such, the Film Content Information Act, 2020 will come into force on June 8th, 2021. The Middlesex London Health Unit and the Southwest Tobacco Control Area Network will continue their efforts to educate parents about the harmful effects of tobacco impressions in films and will expand their work to include tobacco impressions consumed on streamed content such as Netflix.

This report was prepared by the Healthy Living Division.



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