

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 October 17

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## **SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO YOUTH UNITE TO CELEBRATE “WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY”**

### **Recommendation**

*It is recommended that Report No. 112-13 re Southwestern Ontario Youth Unite to Celebrate World No Tobacco Day be received for information.*

### **Key Points**

- World No Tobacco Day is celebrated every year on May 31 in an effort to reduce worldwide consumption of tobacco industry products and to raise awareness about tobacco industry tactics globally.
- This year, approximately 60 young people from 9 public health units gathered in London to profile how the tobacco industry directs marketing tactics to young people, and to advocate for a ban on the marketing and sale of any new or existing tobacco industry product that contains candy or fruit flavours.

### **Background**

[World No Tobacco Day](#) is celebrated each year on May 31 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other tobacco control partners working to raise awareness about the harms associated with tobacco use. Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death globally and is responsible for killing one in ten adults worldwide.

The theme for this year’s World No Tobacco Day was “banning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.”

Studies have shown that bans on tobacco advertising can lead to a decrease in the number of people initiating and continuing tobacco use. If tobacco advertising and sponsorship were banned, this would effectively reduce tobacco product demand because the tobacco industry would not be able to use their deceptive or misleading tactics to target and attract new users, particularly children and youth.

The Southwest Tobacco Control Area Network (SW TCAN), comprised of the nine public health units in southwestern Ontario, Smokers’ Helpline and the Program Training and Consultation Centre, decided to join forces to support youth from across the region so that they could celebrate World No Tobacco Day together.

### **One Life One You**

The [One Life One You](#) Youth Leaders are employed by the Health Unit. The six (6) Youth Leaders are between the ages of 15 and 18 years and come from different neighbourhoods in London. They meet weekly with a Health Promoter to discuss health issues and trends that are of concern to youth in the community. The Youth Leaders plan and implement interactive educational activities/events and health promotion campaigns to address these issues by reaching out to other youth in the community. While most activities of

the One Life One You group are related to tobacco, they are also able to address other health topics important to the group.

### **The Event**

On May 31, 2013, approximately sixty (60) youth from across Southwestern Ontario gathered at Market Square at the Covent Garden Market (London) from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. to highlight the health risks associated with tobacco use and educate the community about the tactics used by the tobacco industry to recruit new users, such as the addition of candy and fruit-flavouring to tobacco products and the use of attractive packaging.

The Health Unit's One Life One You youth group and Health Promoter worked with eight other health unit youth groups in the planning and implementation of this regional event. One Life One You recruited youth volunteers and promoted the event through several media channels, including the Health Unit's website, and also distributed posters throughout the City of London ([Appendix A](#)).

The World No Tobacco Day youth advocates were dressed from head to toe in colourful morph suits and as life-sized tobacco products. They also participated in a [flash mob dance and performed a song](#) in a united effort to say that "cancer shouldn't come in a candy wrapper" (Photographs attached as [Appendix B](#)).

Community partners that attended the event included the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Lung Association, the Youth Advocacy Training Institute, the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School Robotics Team, and staff from the nine health units.

The Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Deb Matthews, and Middlesex-London Health Unit's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Christopher Mackie congratulated the youth for their continued determination to tackle the tobacco industry and their ongoing efforts to support the Ontario Government's commitment to lowering smoking rates in Ontario.

Media coverage for this event included two newspaper articles, two radio interviews and one television news story. In addition, a total of 135 signatures were collected on a petition advocating for a Federal ban on the marketing and sale of any new Tobacco Industry product that contains youth-friendly candy or fruit flavours.

### **Conclusion/Next Steps**

Petitions signed at the World No Tobacco Day event have been delivered to the Northwest Tobacco Control Network, which is the TCAN leading the project "Flavour Gone" advocating for a federal ban on all flavours to all tobacco products. Next steps will include continued efforts to support the federal ban on flavoured tobacco products and to support the "Freeze the Industry" campaign, which was spear-headed by youth in the East TCAN, and calls for a complete moratorium on any new tobacco product being introduced into the market place.

This report was prepared by Ms. Tanya Weishar, Health Promoter; Ms. Sarah Neil, Public Health Nurse; and Ms. Linda Stobo Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention & Tobacco Control Team.



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<p><b>This report addresses</b> the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Foundations: Principles 1, 2; Comprehensive Tobacco Control: 6, 7, and 11</p>
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