



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Dr. Gayane Hovhannisyan, Acting Medical Officer of Health
Laura Di Cesare, Acting Chief Executive Officer

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CITY OF LONDON BEVERAGE VENDING REVIEW AND OPPORTUNITY FOR FURTHER ACTION ON SUGARY DRINKS

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- 1. Receive Report No. 006-17 re: City of London Beverage Vending Review and Opportunity for Further Action on Sugary Drinks;*
- 2. Support the receipt of \$15,000 from the Healthy Kids Community Challenge fund from the City of London's Child and Youth Network to implement a community education campaign on the health risks associated with sugary drinks and the benefits of water;*
- 3. Direct staff to complete the online endorsement of the [Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition's \(Stop M2K\) Ottawa Principles](#) to communicate its support to restrict food and beverage marketing to children and youth 16 years of age and younger; and*
- 4. Communicate support for STOP M2K's Ottawa Principles by sending Report No. 006-17 re: City of London Beverage Vending Review and Opportunity for Further Action on Sugary Drinks, and its appendices to other Boards of Health in Ontario.*

Key Points

- Sugary drinks are the single-largest source of sugar in our diets.
- Public education about the health risks associated with sugary drinks is required, as are policies at the municipal, provincial and federal levels that help to restrict access to unhealthy choices.
- A comprehensive strategy that includes federal legislation to restrict commercial food and beverage marketing to children and youth 16 years and under is necessary.

Update on the City of London Beverage Vending Review

In September 2016, staff from both the City of London and the Health Unit began working together to: assess current beverage vending machine offerings; conduct a survey to seek input from facility users and City of London residents on what changes could be made to the beverage vending machine environment in city-run facilities; review the literature and conduct an environmental scan to inform proposed changes; and propose five policy options for consideration. The survey methodology, research findings and policy options can be found in the Health Unit's report ([Appendix A](#)).

The Health Unit's recommendation to remove beverage vending machines was not adopted by the City of London; however, the Health Unit remains committed to working with city staff to determine how best to improve vending machine offerings. The Health Unit's survey results and the community dialogue around sugary drinks have highlighted the need for greater public awareness regarding the public health concerns associated with consumption and marketing of sugary drinks. The Health Unit has the opportunity to receive \$15,000 from the Healthy Kids Community Challenge fund, from the City of London's Child and Youth Network, to implement a public education campaign to reinforce the fact that sugary drinks should only be consumed sparingly and that water is the best choice for hydration and health. The Health Unit will also

continue to work closely with Middlesex County's Healthy Kids Community Challenge partners to improve the food and beverage environments in community centres, schools and childcare settings.

Reducing the Availability of Sugary Drinks

Municipal and family-focused centres are priority settings for supporting healthy eating behaviours among children, youth and families. The removal of beverage vending machines makes the healthy choice (plain tap water) the easy choice, and reduces consumer confusion around sugary drinks, which are marketed by the beverage industry as "healthier" ("health-washed"), because such drinks would no longer be available for sale. From a health perspective, sports drinks, vitamin waters and juices also contribute to the negative health effects of too much sugar in the diet. [Appendix B](#) provides considerations for consumers when selecting drinks often found for sale in vending machines.

Rationale for a Ban on Marketing and Advertising

Brand logos and product advertisements are positively associated with consumers' purchasing decisions, specifically of unhealthy foods (e.g., salty snacks, candy and sugar-sweetened beverages). Vending machines not only act as mini-billboards, but provide quick, easy access to energy-dense, nutrient-poor sugary drinks. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's [2017 Report on the Health of Canadians](#) takes aim at the food and beverage industry for marketing directly to children and youth, and shows how industry marketing reaches them in the home, at school, on the street and in recreational centres. The most accessible and heavily marketed choices are often energy-dense, nutrient-poor processed foods and sugary drinks, like those found in vending machines. According to the report, "parents are doing the best job they can but our environment makes it hard." The report recommends legislation restricting food and beverage marketing aimed at children and youth, and calls for a comprehensive strategy that includes public awareness and policies that support reduced sugar consumption and access, especially in "liquid form." Policies at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, which increase access to healthy food and beverage choices and restrict access to unhealthy choices, are required.

Opportunity to Take Action on Food and Beverage Marketing

There is greater understanding today about how commercial food and beverage marketing prevents children and youth from developing healthy habits that would extend into adulthood. The [Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition](#) (Stop M2K), founded by the Heart and Stroke Foundation in collaboration with the Childhood Obesity Foundation, is working to restrict all food and beverage marketing to children and youth 16 years and under. The Coalition has developed the [Ottawa Principles](#), which provide definitions, scope and requirements that should be used to guide development of federal legislation to restrict commercial marketing to children and youth. There is an opportunity for all Ontario Boards of Health to continue to work with local municipal governments to implement healthy changes within the food environment at the local level, while at the same time communicating Board of Health support for the Stop M2K Coalition's recommendations, by signing the online [endorsement](#). It is recommended that the Middlesex-London Board of Health direct Health Unit staff to complete the online endorsement and communicate its support by sending this report and its appendices to the other Boards of Health.

This report was prepared by Ellen Lakusiak, Kim Loupos and Heather Thomas, Health Unit Registered Dietitians, and Linda Stobo, Program Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention and Tobacco Control.



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This report addresses the following requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards (revised May 2016): Foundational Standard 1, 3, 4, 5, 8; Chronic Disease Prevention 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11; Child Health 1, 4.