

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
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Email: Christine.Elliott@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Elliott;

The Middlesex-London Board of Health and its staff share the Ministry of Health's concerns regarding the increase in vapour product use by young people in Ontario and the growing concerns related to severe pulmonary illness related to vaping. The Board of Health commends you for issuing the Minister's Order under section 77.7.1 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, and for the work that is being done collaboratively with the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, to establish a uniform approach to identifying and reporting cases of severe pulmonary illness related to vaping. With the growing number of cases under investigation across Canada and the United States, the reporting of confirmed and probable cases will provide information necessary to understand the scope of this issue and the health consequences associated with vaping.

At its meeting on October 17, 2019, the Middlesex-London Board of Health heard a delegation from Western University's Human Environments Analysis Laboratory Youth Advisory Council (HEALYAC). HEALYAC is comprised of 14 high school students (13-18 years) representing diverse communities within the city of London. The HEALYAC identified vaping as one of the most important health issues facing youth in the London community. To share their concerns with public health and other community stakeholders, they wrote the attached Position Statement, "*Vaping in Schools and Student Health*". The Board of Health and its staff share the concerns that are outlined in the HEALYAC position statement, which is attached for your consideration, and commend them for their efforts to be a voice for young people within our community.

With a 74% increase in youth vaping and a 45% increase in youth smoking from 2017 to 2018 in Canada ([Hammond, D. et al., 2019](#)), in addition to growing concerns about the health harms associated with vapour product use, the Board of Health is concerned about the growing rates of nicotine addiction in young people, after decades of decline in youth smoking rates.

To reduce youth access, appeal and advertising of vapour products, please consider an amendment to the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017 (SFOA, 2017)* that would prohibit the promotion and advertising of vaping products in/at places where vaping products are sold and youth have access. In Middlesex-London, there are electronic screen ads, lit display cases, signs affixed to gas pumps and even 7-foot tall stand up displays at gas stations and convenience stores across our jurisdiction. The promotional materials use slogans like "Bold and Stylish", "Genius", "Experience the Breakthrough – make the switch", and "You've Got to Try it", which are attractive and enticing to young people, perpetuating misinformation that these products are safe to use without risk.

Secondly, to reduce youth access to vapour products from retailers with a history of routine non-compliance, please consider amending Section 22 of the *SFOA, 2017* to include vapour product sales offences. The automatic prohibition policy measure has proven effective in curbing tobacco sales to persons under the age of 19 years. Age restrictions for the sale and supply of vaping products have been in effect in Ontario since 2016; the inclusion of vaping product sales offences within the automatic prohibition order is timely.

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Growing concerns related to health harms associated with vaping product use and the uptick of vaping across Ontario and Canada is a significant public health concern, and we thank you for your consideration and continued efforts to develop and refine health protective measures that will help to safeguard the health of our community. The Middlesex-London Board of Health and its staff are committed to working with the Ministry of Health and the Ontario Government as a whole, to address this emerging issue of public health concern.

Sincerely,

Trish Fulton, Chair
Middlesex-London Board of Health

Attachments:

Middlesex-London Board of Health Report 059-19, "Collaborative Action to Address Vaping Concerns"
HEALYAC Position Statement: Vaping in Schools and Student Health

cc: The Honourable Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, MPP Elgin-Middlesex-London
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