



MEDIA RELEASE

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HEALTH COALITION TO MPPS: MAKE NATIONAL NON-SMOKING WEEK MEANINGFUL, COMMIT TO PASSING THE *YOUTH SMOKING PREVENTION ACT (BILL 131)*

Toronto – Members of all parties in the Ontario Legislature can recognize the importance of National Non-Smoking Week by committing to pass the *Youth Smoking Prevention Act* (Bill 131) as soon as the Legislature reconvenes on February 18th, says a coalition of some of the province’s leading health agencies.

Founding Agencies

Canadian Cancer Society
Ontario Division

Heart and Stroke
Foundation of Ontario

Non-Smokers’
Rights Association

Ontario Medical Association

Supporting Agencies

Association of Local
Public Health Agencies

Cancer Care Ontario

Ontario Association of
Children’s Aid Societies

Ontario Association of
Naturopathic Doctors

Ontario Federation of Home
and School Associations

Ontario Physical and Health
Education Association

Ontario Public Health
Association

Physicians for a
Smoke-Free Canada

Registered Nurses
Association of Ontario

The Ontario College
of Family Physicians

National Non-Smoking Week was founded in 1977 by the Canadian Council for Tobacco Control and is Canada’s longest-running annual promotion of the need to reduce use of tobacco industry products, the number one cause of preventable disease and death.

Bill 131, the *Youth Smoking Prevention Act*, was introduced in the Legislature by Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Deb Matthews on November 18th and received First Reading at that time.

“This bill takes several important steps towards protecting our kids from tobacco products,” said Michael Perley, Director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco. “Its complete ban on candy and fruit flavours in all tobacco products will be a major step forward in reducing the misleading attractiveness that flavourings add to some tobacco products. Its provisions making sports fields and playgrounds smoke-free, and banning tobacco sales on college and university campuses, will send important messages to our young people about the dangers of any exposure to tobacco products.”

Mark Holland, Ontario Director of Health Promotion and Public Affairs of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, stressed the Bill’s importance to young adults as well: “Allowing smoking on patios associates tobacco use with relaxation and socializing with friends. Bill 131’s regulations will make patios 100% smoke-free: this tells young adults who sometimes smoke on patios that any use of tobacco products, occasional or not, is dangerous. Today, patios are often occupied almost entirely by younger smokers, which makes it impossible for families to take their kids there, or for non-smokers to enjoy socializing on a patio.”

“We support protecting our children from all tobacco products, especially flavoured tobacco products which are aimed squarely at our youth,” said Dr. Scott Wooder, President of the Ontario Medical Association. “We call on all MPPs to commit to pass Bill 131 at the earliest opportunity.”

“As an election may be called this spring, the process of passing Bill 131 must start as soon as the Legislature reconvenes,” said Rowena Pinto, Vice President, Public Affairs and Strategic Initiatives of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division. “Bill 131 has only received First Reading. We need Second Reading debate, possibly hearings, further discussion at Third Reading, and ultimately Proclamation. Regulations implementing certain parts of the Bill have to be written. While we recognize that all parties in the Legislature have differing priorities heading into this pre-election season, we are sure that they can all agree on the obligation we have as Ontarians to keep our young people tobacco-free.”

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The Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco was founded in 1992 by the Canadian Cancer Society (Ontario Division), the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Non-Smokers' Rights Association, and the Ontario Medical Association to promote comprehensive tobacco control in Ontario.

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