



Memorandum

TO: Members of Committee of the Whole
FROM: Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health
DATE: May 7, 2015
RE: **York Region's Proactive Tobacco Control Efforts**

In 2000, York Region enacted a no-smoking bylaw to protect employees in their workplaces, and the public in establishments such as restaurants, bars and bingo halls. Bylaw Officers were hired by Public Health to educate employers to ensure a smooth transition to smoke-free indoor spaces. The positive momentum of municipalities setting this standard of protection encouraged the Province to legislate the *Smoke Free Ontario Act* (the Act) in 2006.

As the Act phased in restrictions, such as the elimination of designated smoking rooms and a retail tobacco display ban, the support of Council has enabled York Region to consistently achieve benchmark compliance rates well above provincial targets. A current compliance rate of 97% for tobacco vendors, pertaining to the sale of tobacco to youth, is considered amongst the highest in the Province.

Along with these successes has come increased public awareness that has shifted focus from smoke-free indoor areas to smoke-free outdoor recreational spaces. York Region assumed a leadership role with the *Play, Live, Be Tobacco-Free* campaign, working with community groups and sports organizations, promoting the creation of bylaws, tobacco-free policies and adopting healthy, smoke-free lifestyles. With the support of the Community and Health Services Committee in 2011, a report to Council encouraged the Region's nine municipalities to consider bylaws that would make outdoor spaces and children's play areas smoke-free. This has resulted in four of the municipalities creating such by-laws (*Town of Georgina, Town of East Gwillimbury, Town of Newmarket and the City of Vaughan*); two others have adopted policies in lieu of implementing by-laws (*Town of Richmond Hill and Town of Aurora*). Other municipalities are at varying stages in their discussions regarding smoke-free outdoor spaces; however, with the expansion of the Act and public parks and playgrounds now being deemed smoke-free, there will be consistency in designating smoke-free outdoor spaces.

Many enhancements to the Act have taken place over the last decade in light of significant and ongoing influence from municipalities. In pursuit of strengthening provincial tobacco control policy, various formal communications to the Province have been championed by York Region over the past several years. Letters of support have conveyed the need to create a level playing field, province-wide, through enhanced policy for smoke-free public places and workplaces including restaurant and bars. Follow-up communication from these letters requested the need for 100% smoke-free patios. Recently, York Region has implemented a no-smoking policy in its social housing communities that will transition them within just a few years to be 100% smoke-free residences. Conversations are ongoing regarding a corporate policy expanding outdoor smoke-free spaces.

York Region remains at the forefront of tobacco control efforts in Ontario, with strong representation at Provincial tables. By endorsing smoking enforcement and tobacco addiction programming as long-term priorities, Council has continued to influence provincial policy and led the way in creating and maintaining the safest and healthiest communities possible.

Dr. Karim Kurji
Medical Officer of Health

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