



Ontario Public Health Association

l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario

Established/Établi 1949

**Presentation to the Ontario
Legislature's
Standing Committee on
General Government**

***Bill 45, Making Healthier Choices
Act, 2014***

April 21, 2015

Opening Remarks

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee. My name is Pegeen Walsh and I am the Executive Director of the Ontario Public Health Association.

Our non-profit, non-partisan association brings together those committed to improving people's health. Many of our members are on the front lines of community and public health working to prevent tobacco use, especially among youth, and support healthy eating and nutrition. We also collaborate with others and are proud to be a founding member of the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.

The Importance of Prevention

The Ontario Public Health Association has been a champion for healthy public policy since its creation over 65 years ago. We are committed to strategies focussed on prevention and health protection and promotion. As such, we are supportive of Bill 45 as it provides an important building block for creating a comprehensive provincial chronic disease prevention system, reducing health care costs and promoting health and wellbeing.

Support for Tobacco Control Measures

As tobacco use continues to be the leading cause of preventable disease and premature death in Ontario, we support measures that can help reduce its use and prevent young people from starting.

E-Cigarettes

That is why members of our association support the restrictions on the promotion and sale of e-cigarettes to youth under the age of 19. We agree that e-cigarettes should be treated like other tobacco products, and be restricted where they are sold and used.

While we recognize the need for further study to better understand the risks associated with e-cigarettes, we share The World Health Organization's concerns about the potential for e-cigarettes to act as a gateway to nicotine addiction and tobacco smoking, particularly for youth. Marketing of e-cigarettes can undermine tobacco control efforts that have helped denormalize smoking and may threaten the progress that has been achieved.

Flavoured Cigarettes

OPHA also supports the banning of products that encourage youth to try or keep smoking. Cigarettes are highly addictive and those who start smoking before they are 20 years old are more likely to be long time smokers. Making tobacco products less appealing by banning flavoured cigarettes can help prevent youth from starting to use tobacco products in the first place.

By masking the harsh taste of nicotine, menthol flavoured cigarettes can increase the appeal of smoking and be a popular way for young people to experiment.

Ontario has been a leader in tobacco control in Canada and we welcome measures such as these that will keep Ontario at the forefront.

The Value of Menu Labelling

With increasing rates of type II diabetes and other chronic diseases, and the growing number of Ontarians who are overweight and obese, we support Bill 45's call for menu labelling among restaurant chains.

By providing critical nutrition information on menus, we can support consumers in making healthier choices when eating out. Menu labelling can inform people's decision-making, make nutritional information more transparent and consistently available at the point of sale. Given that Ontarians are eating out more than ever before, food environments away-from-home are an important setting to improve population health in our province.

While many large restaurant chains do voluntarily provide nutrition information, on their websites or via a brochure, these formats do not make nutrition information readily available to all consumers but rather to those motivated to seek it out. That is why OPHA strongly supports a legislative approach to menu labelling.

Several U.S. jurisdictions have implemented menu labelling legislation and have demonstrated that it is both feasible and effective. There is also early evidence that menu labelling has had the positive effect of prompting restaurant chains to create healthier menu options which benefits all consumers.

OPHA strongly encourages the inclusion of sodium values alongside calorie counts in the provincial government's menu labelling initiative. High levels of sodium in restaurant foods are contributing to Canadians' overconsumption of sodium, which has negative health consequences such as hypertension. OPHA also recommends mandating the provision of calorie and sodium information at the point of purchase in many other large chain establishments that sell "ready-to-eat" food for immediate consumption (e.g., supermarkets, convenience stores, theatres).

OPHA encourages other initiatives that can maximize the effectiveness of provincial menu labelling legislation, such as food literacy initiatives and public education to increase awareness and use of and demand for menu labelling and the creation of a comprehensive strategy to tackle obesity, promote wellness and prevent chronic diseases.

Saving Health Care Costs through Prevention

It costs less to prevent health problems than it does to treat them. Bill 45 is an important step in creating a comprehensive chronic disease prevention system in Ontario.

The public health community's experience from tobacco control has shown that to effect change a comprehensive approach is needed. It's the interplay of legislation and policy, social marketing and education, skill building and creating supportive environments that makes a difference.

OPHA encourages the legislature to pass these important measures and welcomes the opportunity to work with legislators to create positive change in order to promote health and wellbeing.

Thank you for the opportunity to convey the ideas and concerns of our association.

Pegeen Walsh
Executive Director, OPHA

About OPHA

Created in 1949, the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that brings together a broad spectrum of groups and individuals concerned about people's health. OPHA's members come from various backgrounds and sectors - from the various disciplines in public health, health care, academic, non-profit to the private sector. They are united by OPHA's mission of providing leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthening the impact of people, who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. This mission is achieved through professional development, information and analysis on issues effecting community and public health, access to multidisciplinary networks, advocacy on health public policy and the provision of expertise and consultation.

OPHA members have been leading change in their communities on a wide range of issues - tobacco control, poverty reduction, diabetes prevention, increased access to oral health care, immunization, supporting children and families, food security, healthy eating and nutrition, climate change and designing walkable communities, among others.

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