

Peel Regional council updated on healthy choices progress

By Josh Braun

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term care made various announcements in November supporting public health priority areas related to tobacco-free living and healthy eating.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Association (SFAO) stated that as of Jan. 1, 2013, smoking tobacco is prohibited on restaurant and bar patios and within 20 metres of public playgrounds and sporting areas, according to a recent staff report that was received without comment by Peel Regional council. As well, tobacco cannot be sold on university or college campuses, in schools or day nurseries. The staff report stated SFAO is trying to push Bill 45 through the legislative process Bill 45 prohibits all sales of flavoured tobacco products and enhancing enforcement powers, including increased fines and an ability to remove samples for testing substances used in hookah pipes (also known as water pipes). The bill restricts the sale and use of e-cigarettes.

Fifteen per cent of the population in Peel smoke cigarettes, according to staff. Based on a population of 1.3 million, this amounts to about 195,000 people. Staff added the announced provincial strategies will advance Peel Public Health's Living Tobacco-Free and Supportive Environments for Healthy Living Priorities by reducing exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke, and the overall prevalence of smoking, as well as encouraging healthy eating choices.

The Health Menu Choices Act (HMCA) of 2014 requires menu labeling displaying calorie levels in restaurants and grocery stores with more than 20 outlets in Ontario. The hope to encourage healthy eating in Ontario.

HMCA's decision to label calorie levels in grocery stores and restaurants may decrease the diabetes rates in Peel. Peel has the highest rate for diabetes in Ontario with 12.3 of the population suffering from it. In spite of their efforts diabetes rates are expected to continue to rise.