September 15, 2010

The Honourable Margarett Best
Minister – Minister’s Office
Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport
777 Bay Street, 18th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Dear Minister Best:

Re: Harmful Effects of Artificial Tanning

The Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, at its meeting on September 15, 2010, endorsed the following recommendation advocating for the development of strong and comprehensive legislation that will protect the public, and in particular youth, from the harmful effects of artificial tanning. It was recommended that the Board of Health correspond with the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, all local Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP), and all Ontario Boards of Health communicating its support for Bill 31, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2010 to prohibit selling or supplying tanning services or ultra-violet light treatment services to persons under the age of 19.

On behalf of the Board of Health, I urge you to ensure the Ontario Government takes the necessary steps to enact legislation that will ban access to tanning equipment for children under the age of 19 and protect the public from the harmful effects of artificial tanning.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dennis Roughley
Chair, Board of Health

DR:JF:mk

Encl.

Copies to:

Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Ms. Aileen Carroll, MPP, Barrie
Mr. Norm Miller, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka
Mr. Garfield Dunlop, MPP, Simcoe North
Mr. Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey
Ms. Julie Munroe, MPP, York-Simcoe
All Ontario Boards of Health
Harmful Effects of Artificial Tanning

Issue:

Exposure to ultra-violet radiation (UVR) from artificial tanning beds increases the risk of melanoma, especially when exposure is started during childhood and adolescence. Legislation is required to protect persons under the age of 19 from the harmful effects of artificial tanning.

Recommendation:

That the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health correspond with the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, all local Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP), and all Ontario Boards of Health communicating its support for Bill 31, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2010 to prohibit selling or supplying tanning services or ultra-violet light treatment services to persons under the age of 19.

Current Facts:

There is no government legislation in Ontario restricting artificial tanning for youth under the age of 19, although this is a strategy that will help prevent skin cancer (Facts on cancer in Ontario, Canadian Cancer Society, 2007, April). On April 13, 2010, MPP’s passed the First Reading of Bill 31, Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2010. The Bill would prohibit the marketing and selling of tanning services to anyone under the age of 19. It would also obligate businesses offering these services to join a public registry, ensure that staff are adequately trained, and post signage indicating the health effects of tanning services. The Bill is supported by the Canadian Cancer Society (Ontario Division) and the following health units: Porcupine Health Unit, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, Timiskaming Health Unit, Durham Region Public Health, Grey Bruce Health Unit and Sudbury & District Health Unit.

Background:

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Ontario, accounting for one-third of all new cancer diagnoses. Melanoma, the least common but most serious type of skin cancer, is increasing significantly in incidence and is the
second most common form of cancer in people in Ontario between the ages of 15-34. (Canadian Cancer Society, 2007)

In 2009, the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO-IARC) announced that it had moved UV tanning beds to its highest cancer risk category – group 1 - “carcinogenic in humans”. The WHO-IARC reports that indoor tanning before the age of 30 raises the risk of melanoma by 75%, especially when exposure is started during childhood and adolescence. (International Agency for Research On Cancer, 2009)

Approximately 32,000 females and 18,000 males in Grades 7 to 12 in Ontario have used artificial tanning equipment. (Canadian Cancer Society, 2007)

There is no government legislation in Ontario restricting artificial tanning for youth under the age of 19, although this is a strategy that will help prevent skin cancer. In a poll commissioned by the Canadian Cancer Society in 2009, 80% of Canadians indicated they would support legislation that restricts use of indoor tanning equipment for youth under 18 years of age. (Canadian Cancer Society, 2010). A number of professional bodies including the Canadian Dermatological Society have called for strong and comprehensive legislation to protect the public from the harmful health effects of artificial tanning.

Contact:

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Joyce Fox, Director, Healthy Living Service            Ext. 7210

References

