

REPORT Regional Council

For Information

DATE:

April 4, 2011

REPORT TITLE: UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL FOOD AND

BEVERAGE POLICY

FROM:

Janette Smith. Commissioner of Health Services

David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this report is to provide an update on the work Peel Public Health has undertaken to support the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel District School Board in their introduction of the Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Under the Ministry of Education's new School Food and Beverage Policy, all school boards in Ontario must ensure that all food and beverages sold on school property for school purposes must meet specific nutritional standards by September 1, 2011.
- Peel Public Health has partnered with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel District School Board to support the introduction of the new policy.
- In Peel, 31 per cent of boys and 26 per cent of girls between grades 7 and 12 have been Overweight adolescents are likely to become classified as overweight or obese. overweight adults.
- This progressive, health-first policy is the most significant opportunity to positively impact the good health of our population since the introduction of smoke-free legislation. Healthy eating during childhood and adolescence not only improves health but also enhances learning and promotes the best possible growth and intellectual development. It can also create changes that support life-long healthy eating patterns.
- Peel Public Health's work with Peel schools on the introduction of this new mandatory provincial policy supports the Strategic Plan Term of Council Priority, Promote a supportive environment for healthy weights.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

Peel Public Health is currently mandated by the province to provide health services to local school communities. This includes supporting schools with the implementation of the Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy.

In January 2010, the Ministry of Education released the School Food and Beverage Policv. The policy, which must be fully implemented by September 1, 2011, requires all food and beverages offered for sale in Ontario's publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools to

comply with the nutritional standards set out in the policy. Ontario is the last province in Canada to introduce nutrition standards in its schools. All schools must also continue to comply with the provincial Trans Fat Standards that came into effect on September 1, 2008.

Under the policy, all food and beverages must fit into one of three categories:

- **Sell Most** the healthiest options and generally have higher levels of essential nutrients and lower amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium. Eighty per cent of all items sold in schools must fall into this category.
- Sell Less may have slightly higher amounts of fat, sugar and/or sodium. No more than 20 per cent of all food and beverages sold in schools can fit in this category.
- Not Permitted for Sale includes food and beverages with high levels of fat, sugar and/or sodium, or items fried or deep-fried.

Food items such as french fries, chicken fingers and other fried foods will be replaced by non-fried and more nutritious options like baked sweet potato fries, grilled chicken strips and more. Pop and sports drinks will be replaced with 100 per cent fruit juices, water and milk. Pizza will become more nutritious through the use of whole-grain crusts, lower-fat toppings and vegetables, and more fruit and vegetables will be available. Portion sizes will also be more closely monitored.

In Peel, 31 per cent of boys and 26 per cent of girls between grades 7 and 12 have been classified as overweight or obese. Overweight adolescents are likely to become overweight adults. Healthy eating plays an integral role in the maintenance of a healthy weight and a healthy lifestyle. Roughly one-third of a child's daily food intake occurs at school; therefore, schools play an integral role in preparing students with the skills to make healthy food choices and in reinforcing the use of those skills.

The new policy is part of a broad, province-wide effort to create healthier learning environments and enhance student achievement. Research has shown that healthy eating during childhood and adolescence not only improves health but also enhances learning and promotes the best possible growth and intellectual development. The implementation of the new standards outlined in the School Food and Beverage Policy will help create the foundation for children to continue to make healthy choices into adulthood. The policy has the potential to be the single largest positive influence on the good health of our population since the introduction of smoke-free legislation.

The French School Board, headquartered in Toronto, is also mandated to achieve compliance and Toronto Public Health staff are assisting them. Private schools are encouraged, but not required by legislation, to follow the standards. Peel Public Health will support private schools who wish to adopt the standards.

This work with the school boards also supports the Strategic Plan Term of Council Priority, Promote a supportive environment for healthy weights.

2. Support for the Implementation of the Policy

Based on direction from the Ministry of Education and the specific needs identified within the region, Peel Public Health has undertaken several initiatives to support the effective and efficient implementation of policy.

a) Promotion of Partnerships

i) School Boards

Peel Public Health is working closely with the Peel District School Board, the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel schools throughout the implementation of the policy. These partnerships connect education professionals with health professionals, including public health nurses, dietitians and policy experts, to ensure the standards are effectively, accurately and efficiently introduced to Peel school communities. The partnership also supports the school boards in their efforts to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education's Foundations for a Healthy School framework, a comprehensive approach to create supportive and healthy physical and social environments for students through the combination of high-quality educational programming and community partnerships.

ii) Pilot Schools

During the 2010-2011 school year, 12 schools were identified as pilot sites and have implemented the policy. The sites include three elementary and three secondary schools from each of the school boards. The pilot phase was used to test the acceptance of the policy, to document the challenges and successes of the implementation, and to develop recommendations to inform the full implementation in September 2011.

iii) Broader School Community

Peel Public Health is engaging the larger school community, including community organizations, food vendors, school councils, parent groups, student councils and other youth, to proactively manage expectations as new food and beverage options are introduced in schools. Currently, Peel Public Health is working with:

- Student trustees and student council presidents to not only understand the perspectives of Peel students but to also examine ways to support youth-planned and led program activities in schools.
- Ecosource, an innovative community environment organization and partner of the Peel District School Board, as part of its school action coalition. This coalition supports the "grown local" recommendations within the new policy.
- Brampton Parks and Recreation to help move its community facilities toward Eat Smart! Recreation Centre Program standards, a step that closer aligns the food offerings in those recreation facilities with the new policy introduced to schools. Eat Smart! is an award program in Ontario that recognizes schools, workplaces and recreation centres for creating healthier environments by meeting exceptional standards for nutrition, safe food handling and complying with a smoke-free environment. Health staff are working with Mississauga and Caledon Parks and Recreation staff who are also considering developing an Eat Smart! policy.

b) Key Activities

Over the last year, Peel Public Health staff members have led workshops and training sessions for teachers, school administrators and school councils. Peel Public Health staff have also developed and maintained a policy web page where educators and

interested parents can gain quick and easy access to policy resources (http://www.peelregion.ca/health/baew/lunches-snacks/policy/).

Peel Public Health staff have provided nutrition consultation to the Boards and their vendors so that the vendors can comply with the new standards. Vendors and Boards are to be commended for their willingness to change the composition of their products, menus and recipes in order to provide more nutritious foods to the children and youth in schools. A social marketing strategy targeted to secondary school students to explain the changes in the food offerings available in their schools, help make healthy eating a social norm and improve the school food environments.

Two policy launch/celebration events, one for each school board, are being held in May. These events will provide teachers, administrators and school council presidents with opportunities to share learnings from the pilot schools and to explore ways to change their on-site food and beverage options, and also align their fundraising programs with the policy.

Each school board and the individual pilot schools will also receive recognition from the Medical Officer of Health at upcoming school trustee meetings scheduled for later this month.

3. Proposed Direction

Peel Public Health will continue to support both Peel school boards with the implementation of the policy. Workshops and learning opportunities will continue to be provided to teachers, school administrators and school councils as the policy is implemented and new areas for learning are identified.

Peel **Public** Health will continue update its school health to website (www.SchoolHealth101.ca) with support materials and emerging information about the policy and its implementation. Public Health Dietitians will also continue to answer policyrelated questions through the Peel Public Health Tier 2 Contact Centre and Public Health Nurses will continue to provide program support and information through Peel Public Health's school health program.

Peel Public Health staff are assessing schools for compliance and assisting Boards to submit their compliance reports to the Ministry of Education by June 2011. While the date for full implementation is September 1, 2011, Peel Public Health anticipates that both school boards will continue to require on-going support to fully achieve compliance with the policy requirements through the 2011-2012 school year. As a result, Peel Public Health has applied to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for one-time funding to evaluate their compliance with the standards.

Peel Public Health will continue to work with schools beyond the next school year to not only sustain the policy's nutrition standards but help build broader and more comprehensive programs to reduce the risk of obesity and overweight among Peel children and youth.

CONCLUSION

Peel Public Health continues to collaborate with the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board to create a strong foundation that encourages healthy behaviours among the near quarter-million school-aged children in Peel region. Peel Public Health will continue to support the implementation and sustainability of the policy as part of a broader effort to develop healthier learning environments and to improve student achievement throughout Peel region.

The School Food and Beverage Policy is a major step forward in creating a supportive environment for healthy eating in schools. Its positive impact on the health of the population has the potential to rival the positive and dramatic influence of smoke-free legislation. Through this policy and its associated behaviour changes, Peel children will be able to reach their full potential and build lifelong behaviours to better manage their own good health.

Janette Smith

Commissioner of Health Services

Jutte Smith

David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health

Mount

Approved for Submission:

D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

For further information regarding this report, please contact Gayle Bursey at extension 2617 or via email at gayle.bursey@peelregion.ca

Authored By: Nadine Khan

c. Legislative Services