

## Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit  
10 Hospital Drive  
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[www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca)



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Peterborough County-City Health Unit's Youth Action Alliance Sends Downtown "Up in Smoke"

### *Pink and Black Balloons Fill City's Core With Tobacco Use Prevention Messages*

Thursday, July 16, 2009, Peterborough

The Peterborough Youth Action Alliance (PYAA) Speak Up! Speak Out! of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit (PCCHU) filled Peterborough's downtown core today with pink and black balloons as part of their "Up in Smoke" event to raise awareness about the dangers of commercial tobacco use and the importance of its prevention.

"Each pink balloon symbolizes a healthy lung, and each black balloon represents a smoker's lung," explained Alex Stinson, youth leader of the PYAA. "It is our hope that curious passersby will read the messages attached to each balloon which debunk promotional tactics used by the tobacco industry while encouraging the health benefits of smoke-free living."

Examples of balloon messages include:

- The average smoker will die about eight years earlier than a similar non-smoker
- Coaches who use tobacco products show kids that it's normal to use tobacco while engaging in sports
- Tobacco will kill over 175 million people worldwide between now and 2030 if nothing is done about the tobacco industry's practices, says the World Health Organization
- After 15 years of quitting smoking, your risk of dying from a heart attack will be equal to that of a person who never smoked
- By not smoking, you reduce the costs on municipal governments to clean up after the 4.5 trillion cigarette butts littered worldwide each year

This event was also organized by the PYAA to encourage the community to participate in an online opinion poll developed by the PCCHU on behalf of the City of Peterborough to gauge the level of public interest in extending the smoke-free by-law to other outdoor areas in the city

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beyond the three local parks already designated. City and county residents are invited to take the two-minute Outdoor Smoke-Free Areas Opinion Poll at [www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca).

Last month, the PCCHU released the first-ever *Peterborough County and City 2009 Tobacco Use Report* which highlighted how smoking and other forms of tobacco consumption continue to be a significant health concern in this region. The report stated that an estimated 286 people die locally every year due to tobacco use, and that one in five county and city residents are smokers. Of particular concern were the findings that youth experimentation rates are not decreasing and that prenatal smoking rates in the Peterborough region were 18.74% in 2008, almost twice as high as the provincial rate of 9.53%.

The PYAA, Speak Up! Speak Out! is a youth-driven community alliance focused on the denormalization of tobacco use. The PYAA is funded by the Ministry of Health Promotion under the Smoke-Free Ontario strategy. Youth from Peterborough have been hired to work with their peers to:

- Prevent tobacco use initiation and addiction among children, youth and young adults;
- To reduce tobacco use in Ontario; and,
- To eliminate involuntary exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

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### **For further information, please contact:**

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### **For information about the City's Smoke-Free by-law, please contact:**

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