

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Health Unit's iThink Campaign Goes National

## *Campaign to Debunk Unhealthy Marketing Tactics Engages Thousands of Youth*



The Peterborough County-City Health Unit's iThink social media campaign has successfully generated a nationwide discussion involving thousands of youth about the connection between branded advertising and their health.

"I am very proud of our peer leaders and their success engaging youth across Canada in this important discussion about the way marketing tactics influence both healthy and unhealthy lifestyle choices," said Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health. "This innovative campaign shows how the Peterborough County-City Health Unit is leading the way in developing effective health promotion tools to reach youth and other target populations."

The iThink campaign uses a number of social media, such as a dedicated Facebook page and YouTube channel where visitors can watch videos, view photo galleries, and engage in conversation through posted comments.

In February, the Health Unit's team of young peer leaders met with officials at the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport to present the iThink campaign. Ministry staff were impressed by the campaign and agreed to provide funding to expand it into every region of Ontario. With the Ministry's support, the Health Unit's professionally produced commercial featuring Peterborough youth was broadcast nationally on MuchMusic and MTV Canada, and a province-wide FaceBook campaign was launched. In just two weeks, the campaign generated more than 7,000 clicks to its FaceBook page, 1,600 "likes" and hundreds of posts from youth engaged in the discussion.

"We're seeing an amazing discussion among youth as they recognize the role media play in their lifestyle decisions," said Keith Beecroft, Youth Development Worker with the Health Unit. "This campaign provides a healthy forum for teens to share their observations and highlight tactics companies use to influence their choices, from product placements to celebrity endorsements."

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The iThink campaign was launched to denormalize big industries by showing youth the other side of using their products. For example, alcohol advertising portrays drinking as a good time, but never shows the potential negative impacts, such as injuries, lost productivity and cancer. Also, tobacco companies continually use celebrities that smoke as a way to influence youth to use their products. Likewise, fast food companies often advertise “value menus” and “healthy choices”, but do not show the impact of higher fat, higher sodium food choices or the true cost of portions larger than the recommended serving sizes in Canada’s Food Guide.



To access iThink on Facebook, search “iThink”



The iThink YouTube video is available by clicking:  
<http://www.youtube.com/SpeakUpSpeakOutPTBO>

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