



Torstar file photo

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HALTON POLITICIANS CALL FOR ACTION TO REDUCE YOUTH VAPING

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Halton councillors are demanding action to curb the ever-increasing number of youths using vape products.

A motion calling for a variety of steps the provincial and federal governments can take to curb youth vaping was passed unanimously by regional council during its May 20 session.

The resolution from Oakville Councillors Tom Adams and Jeff Knoll asks the higher levels of government to increase Ontario's minimum age of sale for vaping and tobacco products to 21, establish a maximum nicotine level of 20 mg/mL for all e-cigarettes and put restrictions on flavours, among other measures.

While the motion was in the works before the pandemic, both councillors said perhaps it's even more important to address health issues like vaping now, in light of the respiratory effects also caused by

the coronavirus.

Adams said he worked in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society to craft the resolution, with the organization commending council for taking on the issue.

"The Canadian Cancer Society will build on this momentum and continue to press all levels of government to do more to reduce youth vaping," said Helena Sonea, senior manager of public issues at the Canadian Cancer Society. "This motion identifies the most comprehensive path forward to ensure we don't see a new generation of young people addicted to nicotine through e-cigarettes."

The organization pointed to a recent study published in JAMA Pediatrics, which found that youth vaping among 16- to 19-year-olds in Canada more than doubled over a two-year period between 2017 to 2019, going from 8.4 per cent to 17.8 per cent.

"While the provincial government has made important progress over the past several months, youth vaping in Ontario and in

Canada continues to be on the rise," said Stephen Piazza, Ontario manager of public issues at the Canadian Cancer Society. "We need to act now to reverse this troubling trend."

In Halton, the issue is being addressed by a youth vaping roundtable. Oakville-North Burlington MP Pam Damoff's office organized a roundtable session in January that brought together politicians at all levels of government, public health staff, the Halton District School Board and Canadian Cancer Society.

A memo from Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Hamidah Meghani says participants discussed the opportunities for each level of government to strengthen the controls over vaping accessibility for youth.

"Roundtable participants agreed to a meeting in six months to discuss the progress and actions identified," said Meghani. "Halton Region Public Health will continue to update council on the progress of this important issue."

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