



# Media Release

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For Immediate Release

## More tobacco vendors are selling to York Region youth

NEWMARKET- York Region Health Services is committed to educating residents about the health risks associated with tobacco use. As countries around the globe honour *World No Tobacco Day* on May 31<sup>st</sup>, Health Services reports that the number of tobacco vendors selling tobacco products to local youth has increased.

Under the *Tobacco Control Act*, it is prohibited to sell or supply tobacco to anyone who is less than 19 years of age. Those who do, upon conviction, face fines to a maximum of \$50,000. The legislation is a Provincial law that is administered on a local level by York Region Health Services tobacco enforcement officers.

Tobacco vendors are routinely surveyed to assess compliance with the *Act*. Following Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care protocol, tobacco vendors are randomly selected to determine their willingness to sell tobacco products to underage youth. Test shoppers, aged 15 to 17 years, are employed by York Region Health Services to assist with the survey. They enter the selected stores and attempt to purchase tobacco. If a sale occurs, a tobacco enforcement officer then enters the premise, educates the owner and clerks about the legislation and lays charges.

The most recent check was conducted during April 2005, resulting in 43 charges under the *Tobacco Control Act* for "selling tobacco to a person less than 19 years old." This represents an 11% increase over last year, with 32% of local tobacco vendors surveyed selling tobacco products to youth in 2005, in comparison to 21% in 2004.

"These results are very disturbing," said Vaughan Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio, Chair of the York Region Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee. "This is not new legislation. The *Tobacco Control Act* has been in effect since 1994 and our tobacco control officers have worked closely with local retailers to help them understand their responsibility *not* to sell tobacco products to under age persons."

Restricting youth access to tobacco is vital. Studies indicate that 80% to 90% of smokers start the habit under the age of 18 years. The younger age that people start smoking, the more likely they are to become strongly addicted to nicotine and to continue to smoke throughout adulthood. According to Health Canada, tobacco use is responsible for one in five deaths in Canada.

The following 31 retailers were charged for selling tobacco products to York Region youth:

Five Star Convenience	330 McClellan Way	Aurora
Movies & Tunes	2 Orchard Heights Dr	Aurora
Esso Tiger Express	14923 Yonge St	Aurora
Sunoco Gas Bar	15612 Yonge St	Aurora
IGA	19263 Hwy 48	East Gwillimbury
Mt Albert Variety & Gift	74 Main St	East Gwillimbury

Mac's Milk	28408 Hwy 48	Georgina
Northtown Variety	26 Queensway S	Georgina
Beaver Gas Bar	443 Queensway S	Georgina
Sunoco	1514 Ravenshoe Rd	Georgina
Pinky's Variety	24164 Woodbine Ave	Georgina
Cango	16380 Jane St	King
Aditya's Variety	7381 Kennedy Rd	Markham
TJ Mart	1 Stone Mason Dr	Markham
Town Gifts	8601 Warden Ave	Markham
Centennial Variety	6 Washington St	Markham
Sunoco Gas Bar	8310 Woodbine Ave	Markham
Shell Select	166 Davis Dr	Newmarket
Variety Food Mart	725 Davis Dr	Newmarket
Mi's Variety	361 Carrville Rd	Richmond Hill
Tina Varieties	550 Hwy 7 E	Richmond Hill
Great Canadian News Co.	1 Bass Pro Mills Dr	Vaughan
Esso	8555 Keele St	Vaughan
Petro Pass	120 MacIntosh Blvd	Vaughan
Canadian Tire Gas Bar	3200 Rutherford Rd	Vaughan
For Your Convenience	1600 Steeles Ave W	Vaughan
Esso / Tim Hortons	8525 Hwy 27	Vaughan
Pine Valley Car Wash	1000 Rowntree Dairy Rd	Vaughan
Coffee Time Donuts	4190 Steeles Ave W	Vaughan
Convenience Market	6601 Main Street	Whitchurch-Stouffville
Vandorf General Store	14640 Woodbine Ave	Whitchurch-Stouffville

Businesses which have been convicted of two or more sales offences under the *Tobacco Control Act* can be prohibited from selling tobacco for six months. Tobacco enforcement officers will be increasing the inspections of tobacco vendors and laying as many charges as necessary to stop this increasing trend of tobacco sales to youth.

Selling or supplying tobacco to anyone under the age of 19 years of age is against the law. York Region Health Services encourages residents to call and report any vendor that they see selling to under age youth. All calls are kept in the strictest of confidence.

To report a vendor or for information on the *Tobacco Control Act* or other health-related issue, contact York Region Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 or visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

Contact: Kim Clark, York Region Health Services  
905-830-4444 Ext. 4101  
kim.clark@york.ca