



March 29, 2011

Councillor Paul Ainslie, Chair  
Government Management Committee  
City of Toronto

Dear Chair and Committee members:

**Can the sugar overload in the city's vending machines**

Healthy choices should be the main decision making criteria for cold drink vending in the City's recreational facilities. The 2011 Spring and Summer Fun guide expresses the goals of PFR in this way: **"Parks, Forestry and Recreation strives to assist residents in their quest for health and wellness".**

The City of Toronto website says: **"Toronto Parks, Forestry and recreation promotes lifelong active living which emphasizes physical activity and healthy eating."**

In July 2005, City Council adopted a motion requesting a report to council for the approval of healthy cold drink vending criteria for an RFP for Cold Drink Vending and Pouring Rights. This report finally made it back to Council in June of 2010. It was referred back to staff for various reasons including clearly setting out the health rationale for offering healthy choices in beverages. The report before Committee from the Medical Officer of Health clearly sets this out.

Undertaking steps to reduce the intake of foods and drinks high in sugars helps prevent unhealthy weight gain, curbs the growing obesity epidemic and reduces other nutrition-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart and stroke, and kidney disease. The internationally acclaimed U.S. Centre of Disease Control and Prevention has recognized obesity as a serious disease. One of their recommendations is "communities should restrict availability of less healthy food and beverages in public service venues." This is the course of action recommended in the report before you today.

During the 6 years this issue has been under review, a number of jurisdictions - provincial governments and municipalities and school boards - have moved forward on healthy drink choices. In Toronto the Trustees at the TDSB adopted a comprehensive healthy drinks vending policy to which Trustees agreed despite a very strong lobby by the soft drink industry. The School Board also includes yogurt drinks as one of the healthy choices available in vending machines.

I am urging the Committee move forward on this important health issue and urge GMC to:

1. Adopt all of the recommendations from the GM of PFR for healthy vending criteria for the Cold Drink Vending Request for Proposal
2. Request the Medical Officer of Health to report to Council on the possible addition of yogurt drinks as a healthy cold drink choice from a vending machine; and
3. Request the GM PFR to ensure there is an abundant supply of drinking water available in all rec centres and arenas prior to its proposed elimination from vending machines in December 2011.

Thank you for your consideration

Councillor Paula Fletcher

Cc Mayor Ford and members of Council

