

No teens in tanning beds in Cullen's Ottawa

BY PATRICK DARE , THE OTTAWA CITIZEN JULY 9, 2009

OTTAWA — Councillor Alex Cullen wants to outlaw visits to tanning salons by teenagers in Ottawa.

Cullen says rising rates of cancer among young people are a serious health problem and the city has responsibility for public health.

Cullen hopes to have the issue on the fall agenda of council's community and protective services committee. He says that the city, which already licenses tanning salons, could fairly easily require that people under 18 not be allowed into the businesses.

The World Health Organization and the Canadian Dermatology Association recommend that no person under the age of 18 use a tanning bed. The association, citing rising rates of skin cancer, has urged governments to prohibit the use of tanning beds by people under 18.

Cullen says that the tanning issue isn't much different from other public health issues such as smoking in public places and the cosmetic use of pesticides. He said the city acted in those instances and eventually the provincial government brought in its own laws.

But Councillor Bob Monette said the tanning salon issue is an example of something the city should not be passing a bylaw on. He said people are tired of the government "legislating our lives."

"It's another example of government putting its nose where it doesn't belong," said Monette. "It would be another unenforceable bylaw and Ottawa's good at those."

Monette said he is not discounting the cancer problem but he said tanning salons, when used properly, can be safe. He favours educating people about excessive tanning or sun exposure rather than banning things.

Mike Hayden, of Top Shape — a personal training studio that runs some tanning beds — said banning tanning for teens "comes across as anti-business." He said tanning beds are a controlled environment for tanning and that properly trained operators go to great lengths to ensure people don't get burned.

Hayden said that he wishes city officials would stick with city business, such as the pothole outside his business on Holland Avenue that keeps returning. It's been a problem for three years, said Hayden, and "It drives me crazy."

© Copyright (c) The Ottawa Citizen