

## One year renewal of Federal Tobacco Control Strategy

# Will tobacco be a priority with this Conservative majority government?

JOE STRIZZI

One day prior to Stephen Harper's walk to the podium to announce that a federal election had been called for May 2, Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq revealed that the *Federal Tobacco Control Strategy* would be extended for another year, in order to evaluate its recent initiatives and to explore its ongoing approaches.

"Under the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FTCS), federal, provincial and territorial efforts have been successful in reducing smoking in Canada and preventing youth from starting to smoke," said Aglukkaq, who was reappointed to her position following the Conservative majority electoral victory. "Health Canada is currently examining ways to ensure Canada remains a world leader in tobacco control and that past gains are maintained," adding that the federal health department is working with its FTCS partners.

According to an email from Health Canada to *Tobacco Info*, this process includes a review of the effectiveness of current programs and policies, as well as an assessment of current tobacco-related issues in Canada.

In the interim, maintaining funding under the FTCS will allow the government to continue to support smokers in their efforts to quit. It will also allow it to continue to address the issue of contraband tobacco and work toward the implementation of new health warnings on cigarette and little cigar packages.

Meanwhile, Health Canada is in the process of negotiating potential projects with a number of organizations for *Federal Tobacco Control Strategy* funding for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

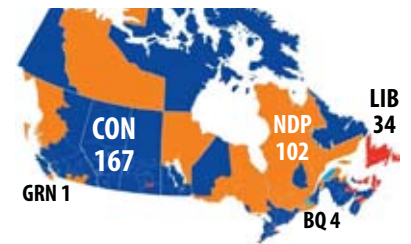
"We are hopeful that Health Canada will continue to see us as good partners in the implementation of the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy," said Cynthia Callard, Executive Director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. "One of the strengths of the tobacco control movement and the issue is that it is pan-partisan — Canadians of all political persuasions work together to address this health crisis. Over the past few parliaments, the Standing Committee on Health has demonstrated that the federal parties will work collaboratively to strengthen tobacco control laws and regulations."

However, the Health Minister was relatively quiet publicly on the tobacco

front following the election, creating some concern among health groups.

André Picard, reporting on a letter from the Quebec Coalition on Tobacco Control sent to the Health Minister, wrote in his May 25 article in the *Globe*

Distribution of seats, Canada, May 2, 2011



With 167 of 308 seats (54%), Stephen Harper leads a majority Conservative government.



### Big tobacco uses front groups

Cigarette manufacturers often go through front groups to promote their interests because their image is low in the media and the public.

3



### Menthol, an insidious trap

The industry has a tight grip on menthol. It facilitates the initiation of smoking and makes quitting more difficult.

10

## SUMMARY

Cigarillos are too light and flavoured

6

Toronto Conference

7

Some provinces update their tobacco-free strategies

8

Plain packaging in Australia

12

FDA restricts new tobacco products

13

Research update

14

and Mail, “strategic investment of public money makes good business sense: Done properly, it is a way of stating priorities, setting goals and measuring results. Is the implied message in the current foot-dragging that tobacco control is no longer a priority? Hopefully, the Conservatives are not abandoning this strategy because it was a Liberal initiative. Smoking is a massive public-health problem, not a matter for petty partisanship.”

However, the Minister stepped up to the plate on June 9, tabling three regulations proposed prior to the election: *Tobacco Products Labelling Regulations (Cigarettes and Little Cigars)*; *Promotion of Tobacco Products and Accessories Regulations (Prohibited Terms)*; and *Regulations Amending the Tobacco Products Information Regulations*.

“We are encouraged by Minister Aglukkaq’s tabling of the regulations,” said Flory Doucas, Codirector of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control (QCTC). “We hope that the Health Committee and Cabinet will also do all that they can to ensure that these regulations are Gazette by the end of June. The new warning labels would then appear just in time to motivate and support smokers, when many of them make the New Year’s resolution to quit once and for all.”

### Conservative platform

Tobacco control was not a major issue during the election, but the Conservative Party platform did include certain contraband initiatives.

Despite indicators showing considerable reductions in the size of the contraband market, the newly elected majority government’s platform read: “Contraband tobacco has become a massive black-market industry. It results in huge losses in revenue. More important, it makes it much cheaper — and therefore much easier — for children and teenagers to start smoking. And, by encouraging smoking, it leads to higher health care costs and higher rates of smoking-related illness and death. To help reduce the problem of trafficking in contraband use, we will establish mandatory jail time for repeat offenders. We will also establish a new RCMP Anti-Contraband Force of 50 officers.”

The platform also reminded voters that the Harper government had introduced legislation restricting flavoured tobacco products and intended to improve warning labels on cigarettes.

**The recent Conservative election platform stresses that contraband tobacco “leads to higher health care costs and higher rates of smoking-related illness and death,” despite a slight downward trend.**



**Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada Director Cynthia Callard hopes that Canada will once again be a leader in tobacco control.**

Still, many groups are left wondering if the tobacco epidemic will be a priority for the new majority government.

“The real deadline before us is March 31, 2012, when the next strategy must be in place and the option of a one-year extension is over,” said Callard. “On the day before the election was called, the Minister made two statements that encourage us to hope that the next FTCS will be ambitious; that the government is committed to ‘innovative approaches’ to ‘remain a world leader’ and ‘to ensure a clear role for the federal government in this area of shared jurisdiction.’”

### The FTCS and its results

Under the FTCS, Health Canada administers \$15.8 million in contribution funding to support a range of tobacco projects across Canada that are aimed at helping people stop smoking, preventing youth from starting to smoke and protecting Canadians from exposure to second-hand smoke. In March 2011, the FTCS was extended for one additional year, until March 31, 2012.

One of the more recent achievements in tobacco legislation under the current FTCS was the introduction of Bill C-32, *An Act to amend the Tobacco Act*, introduced in the House of Commons on May 26, 2009. It received Royal Assent on October 8, 2009. The bill amended existing provisions in the *Tobacco Act* and introduced new provisions relating to, among other things, little cigars, additives in tobacco products and the advertising of tobacco products.

As a result of the implementation of the FTCS in 2001, legislation and other initiatives, Canada now has one of the lowest smoking rates in the world. Smoking rates dropped from 22% in 2001 to 18% in 2009, representing about 500,000 fewer smokers. In 2009, the youth smoking rate was 13%, the lowest rate Health Canada has recorded.

However, over the past few years, smoking rates have hit a plateau and the federal government has fallen behind on some of the goals set nearly a decade ago.

According to Doucas of the QCTC, “Health Canada has routinely under spent its budget by \$9 to \$15 million over the past five years, while markedly downsizing Health Canada’s

tobacco control directorate and the Harper-led government has in many instances taken actions that are counterproductive and demonstrate a lack of a clear vision and position when it comes to tobacco. For example, government settled lawsuits with tobacco companies for trivial amounts of money with no criminal charges being laid and the highly-praised move to ban flavouring in cigarillos is being dodged by tobacco companies.”

According to Callard, a major challenge in the past decade has been the turnover of health ministers, usually as a result of a change in government. Hopefully, with some stability in government, communication should improve.

“Since 2000, we have had three prime ministers and six health ministers [Alan Rock (97-02), Anne McLellan (02-03), Pierre Pettigrew (03-04), Ujjal Dosanjh (04-06), Tony Clement (06-08), and Leona Aglukkaq (08-present).] The change-over means repeated delays as new staff are briefed and as public servants wait for direction. With a four-year term ahead of us, we hope that the backlog of issues will clear and that longer-term planning will be made easier.”



**Historically, opposition parties cooperate with the elected government to introduce anti-smoking legislation or programs. Jack Layton, leader of the NDP, and Bob Rae, acting head of the Liberal Party, will likely support all effective measures against tobacco.**

### Tobacco control and political party stances

Tobacco control was not officially addressed by most political parties in this election, but historically, most have taken a stance.

The New Democratic Party, the official opposition in Parliament, wrote on its website that it has “worked consistently toward tobacco cessation and fully supports the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy and would renew its mandate in 2012.”

The Liberals supported renewal of the *Federal Tobacco Control Strategy* in 2012 for five years and recently pressed for stronger warning labels on tobacco products.

The Bloc Québécois supported a wide range of strong measures to fight the production and distribution of contraband tobacco products, as well as measures to prevent smoking.

The Green Party had supported action on tobacco control and programs for smoking cessation prior to the election, but had no official mandate.

### Industry behind advocacy groups

# Is big tobacco still paying for lip service?

## A 1990s tactic that continues today

ANICK PERREAU-LABELLE

Chairman Richard Burrows admitted in April that British American Tobacco (BAT) had funded and advised the National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN), the biggest association for newsagents and convenience store owners in Great Britain. The goal? To discretely help the NFRN lead a campaign against a bill that would hide cigarette displays in convenience stores.

Tobacco companies have been using third parties to defend their causes for the past 20 years. “It’s what I call lobbying by proxy,” says Raymond Hudon, professor of political science at Laval University in Quebec City. “Since these companies are no longer credible to the public, they use front groups to get their message across.” Specifically, they create or finance retailers or citizens groups whose discourse on smokers rights or against contraband tobacco receives *a priori* a good reception from the public... all the while serving the interests of tobacco companies.

Another recent example of the phenomenon was the creation in 2010 of the Alliance of Australian Retailers (AAR). Its mandate: oppose the bill that would bring mandatory plain packaging to Australian tobacco products in 2012. To do this, the AAR created slick announcements for radio and TV in which small shopkeepers argued that the new law would complicate their work and cause them to lose sales. However, it appears that the AAR is nothing but a front for big tobacco. Indeed the public television station Australian Broadcasting Corporation has revealed that the association received more than \$6 million CDN from British American Tobacco, Philip Morris and Imperial Tobacco Australia. Obviously, the TV and radio spots don’t mention this, although the information does appear on the AAR website.

The best known example of a front group is without a doubt the National Smokers Alliance (NSA). In 1998, the American Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation revealed that this smokers’ rights group had been founded by public relations



**BAT chairman Richard Burrows admitted his company funded convenience store owners to fight against a British tobacco control bill.**



firm Burson-Marsteller, with an approximately \$4 million investment from Philip Morris International. And Canada is no exception: in 2004, the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council (CTMC) invested \$2.5 million in the creation of the Mychoice.ca and Monchoix.ca project. These two websites, active until 2010, claimed to give a voice to smokers and to help them decide if they wanted to smoke or not. In reality, they actively campaigned against smoke-free public legislation.

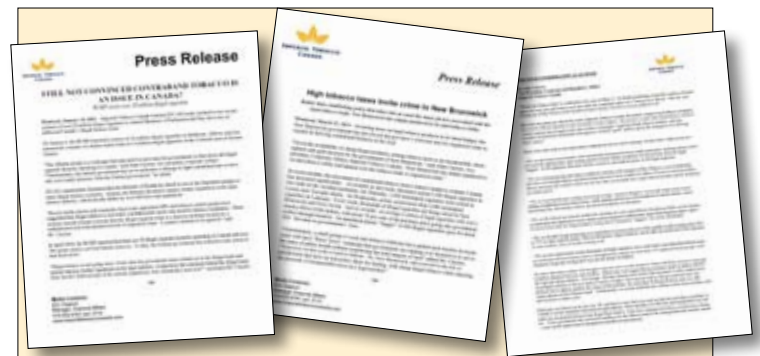
The message these organizations are sending is far from harmless. *"Lack of disclosure by front groups... of their links with the tobacco industry results in unbalanced arguments and evidence, presented without statements of relevant competing interest,"* notes the World Health Organization's 2008 report *Tobacco industry interference with tobacco control*.

### A relationship not always easy to prove

Groups do not always openly acknowledge receiving support and input from tobacco companies. And since they are usually non-profit organizations, nothing obliges them to disclose their financial statements. Nor are their member lists particularly revealing: the tobacco companies aren't always listed as members, and when they are, it is just as one among many.

There are, however, some clues that can suggest a merchants or citizens association is bankrolled by tobacco companies. For example, a newly formed small group, launching a big, expensive campaign is suspicious. *"This was the case for MATRAC (a movement to abolish tobacco taxes) active in the beginning of the 1990s,"* says François Damphousse, Quebec Director for the Non-Smokers' Rights Association (NSRA). *"I found it surprising that convenience store owners — who already work such long hours — had the resources and knowledge to organize large and sophisticated media events on the sale of contraband tobacco."* Tobacco companies have denied any involvement in MATRAC, despite an exposé by journalist André Noël in the Montreal daily *La Presse*, which reported meetings between CTMC and MATRAC decision makers.

In January 2009, Imperial Tobacco Canada halted its funding of smokers group Mychoice.ca, preferring to tackle smuggling. Since then, associations of convenience stores travel throughout Ontario and Quebec calling for more action against contraband cigarettes.



**The tobacco industry has a very poor public image as its products kill about 100 Canadians per day. News releases from Imperial Tobacco almost never echo in the media.**

This is also the case for the Quebec Convenience Stores Association (AQDA - in French). *"I've never seen a cheque, but it's obvious to me that their anti-contraband tours around the province of Quebec needed a lot of resources and were financed by the tobacco companies,"* said Florent Gravel, President of the grocery stores association of Quebec officially titled *Association des détaillants en alimentation du Québec*. *"We have pointed the finger at tobacco companies for their exclusive funding of the AQDA; other organizations, like ours, don't have the benefits of such funding opportunities."*

The AQDA refused to answer questions on the subject, but there are other clues that point to a link between them and the tobacco industry. Michel Gadbois heads the association. André Noël found out he was once a publicist at Benson (now owned by Philip Morris International) and Imasco (now Imperial Tobacco). The AQDA is also a member of the Canadian Convenience Store Association (CCSA). *"The chairs of these organizations are tobacco industry veterans,"* says François Damphousse. In short, the professional background of the people leading so-called independent groups is a telling indicator.

### Tobacco Info funding and evaluation

*Tobacco Info* magazine's launch in Spring 2010, as well as its first five issues, were the result of a project financed in large part by Health Canada. Originally scheduled to conclude on March 31, 2011, this project has recently been extended for a second year.

Therefore, our organization is committed (with pride and commitment) to produce the next five issues of *Tobacco Info* (No. 6 to 10) by March 2012. Our team thanks Health Canada for its renewed confidence and support.

#### EVALUATION

An evaluation of *Tobacco Info* and its sister publication *Info-tabac* was conducted by Janice Forsythe of Cypress Consulting in Ottawa. We would like to thank the 320 respondents to the online and telephone surveys. The report, which was very positive in regards to the work we do, is available at: [www.tobaccoinfo.ca/evaluation2011.pdf](http://www.tobaccoinfo.ca/evaluation2011.pdf).

Denis Côté, *Tobacco Info* and *Info-tabac* Coordinator

There are several other clues highlighting the connection between the AQDA and the tobacco industry. For instance, of the more than 100 links on the association's website, only 20 or so **don't** concern tobacco. Also, the sale of contraband cigarettes is not rising, contrary to what the AQDA says. Indeed, in a May 2010 document, the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control lists all the elements showing otherwise. For example, the 2010-2011 Quebec budget notes that *"revenue from the specific tax on tobacco products is revised upward by \$65 million owing to the increase in the number of cigarettes sold legally."* Also, the British American Tobacco's 2010 annual report notes that *"profit in Canada was higher, with the effect of reduced illicit trade [and] price increases [among other things]."*

A group that does business with the same public relations firm used by tobacco companies is often another indication of where loyalties lie. In the late 1990s, the public relations giant Edelman, which was known to have cigarette manufacturers as clients, was also managing PR for the Alliance for Sponsorship Freedom. This group, which included some 150 sporting and cultural events from across the country, was calling on governments to back down from the ban of tobacco sponsorship, arguing they had a right to choose any legal Canadian corporation as a sponsor. Its pressure tactics led to some delays in the adoption and application, but Ottawa's comprehensive ban on tobacco sponsorship eventually came into force in 2003.

### Are all pro-tobacco groups fronts?

In the world of pressure groups, appearances can sometimes be deceiving. *"Our discourse overlaps somewhat with that of the tobacco industry, but that's not because they're financing us,"* says Yves Servais, Executive Director of a second association of grocery and convenience stores in Quebec. *"It's because cigarettes represent 30% of our members' sales, on average."* (A 2009 study conducted by HEC Montréal, Desjardins Group and PricewaterhouseCoopers confirms this figure.)

Similarly, the *Union des tenanciers de bars du Québec* (UTBQ), a coalition for bar owners, fought from 2005 to 2009 against the smoking ban in Quebec bars, but in an interview with our French-language sister publication *Info-tabac*, UTBQ President Peter Sergakis swears that he never received any money from tobacco companies. This, alas, is very difficult to prove or disprove. But as an indication of Sergakis' good faith, let's mention that over the past 20 years, he has protested against a surcharge on commercial properties, the lowering

**The Alliance for Sponsorship Freedom succeeded in delaying the tobacco sponsorship ban. Controlled by Imperial Tobacco, the Player's racing team existed until the summer of 2003.**



of the legal blood alcohol limit from 0.08 to 0.05, funds paid to the Hippodrome in Montreal, SAQ stamps and the price of parking meters, amongst other things.

Finally, some have argued that Montreal citizens' group Citizens Against Government Encroachment (CAGE) was funded by cigarette companies. Founded in 2004, CAGE says it fights 'nanny-statism' that requires citizens to avoid such things as trans fats and cigarettes. *"We started legal proceedings against a citizen who, under the pseudonym Cathy Bell, alleged that we were on the payroll of tobacco companies and we won, out of court,"* says group co-founder, Daniel Romano. Admittedly, CAGE co-hosted events with Mychoice.ca and more than half of the articles on the group's website have to do with the 'hazards' of smoking cessation. *"But the tobacco companies have refused to help us when we've approached them, to avoid undermining our credibility,"* says Romano candidly.

François Damphousse does not expect to see a surge of new 'independent' groups backed by tobacco companies if Canada or Quebec go ahead with plain packaging laws or a ban on smoking in multi-family dwellings. *"The AQDA will simply extend its mandate to defend the tobacco industry's other issues."* That said, if a new association appears, there are a few questions that need to be asked to uncover its true allegiance. Tobacco control history is full of examples where front groups operated for many years before ever being exposed of having ties or being influenced by the industry.

**Peter Sergakis and his group fought the smoking ban in Quebec bars.**



Working together for a healthier world™

## New study from the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control

# Flavoured cigars don't measure up

Half of flavoured cigars don't meet the legal weight requirements

— by Anick Perreault-Labelle

In July 2010, Canada's *Tobacco Act* was amended to include Bill C-32, which aims to protect youth from tobacco marketing. The new rules, among other things, ban the sale of flavoured cigars that have a cigarette filter and weigh less than 1.4 grams. They aim to reduce the attractiveness of the sweet candy taste these little cigars — or cigarillos — have among kids.

The proof of the appeal these toxic products have? In Quebec, in 2008, more high school students consumed only cigarillos (7%) than cigarettes alone (4%), according to the Quebec Institute of Statistics (11% smoke both and 78% smoke neither). Also in 2008, 6% of students who said that they had always been non-smokers had actually already tried cigarillos, leading the Institute to acknowledge that cigarillos played some role in smoking uptake of youth.

### Colts cigars: 67 to 70% non-compliant

To test the level of compliance with the new legislation, the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control weighed — to the hundredth of a gram — 400 products sold as flavoured cigars. The results were that 49% of these products weighed less than 1.4 grams and were, therefore, in violation of the law.

The Quebec Coalition examined the new generation of small cigars, specially designed to circumvent 2010 federal law.



The Coalition's study shows that *Colts* cigars — distributed by the Scandinavian Tobacco Group Canada (STG Canada) — have a particularly high rate of non-compliance. Sixty-seven percent of *Colts Mild Rum & Wine* and 70% of *Colts Sweets* tested by the Coalition failed to meet the legal weight requirements. For all the brands combined, the average weight of the nearly 200 non-compliant cigars was 1.33 grams or 5% less than the minimum required.

Even taking into account possible variations during manufacturing, these cigars do not pass the test, says the Coalition. For example, the organization notes that Health Canada's *Cigarette Ignition Propensity Regulations* require that 75% of a sample of a company's product pass a conformity test for the product itself to be considered compliant. Applying the same criterion to cigar weight would render no less than nine out of the 10 products studied illegal for sale in Canada.

According to André Blais, STG Canada spokesperson, "the quarterly reports that we send to Health Canada show that when they leave the factory, our *Colts* cigars weigh more than 1.4 grams." Blais explains that the cigars lose some of their moisture, and therefore their weight, during storage.

### A conciliatory government?

The anti-tobacco groups condemn the relative lack of government action on this issue.

### A rigorous study

The Coalition analyzed products sold as 'cigars' by three distributors: Scandinavian Tobacco Group Canada, Casa Cubana and Distribution GVA. Two flavours were chosen from each of the five brands, including *Bullseye Extra* (cherry), *Bullseye Extra* (peach), *Colts Sweets*, *Colts Mild* (rum and wine), *Honey T* (cherry), *Honey T* (peach), *M* by *Colts* (white), *M* by *Colts* (latte), *PrimeTime Plus* (cherry) and *PrimeTime Plus* (peach).

To minimize bias related to the manufacturing or storage, the Coalition carefully selected a sample of 400 cigars. The organization bought two packs of cigars of each of the 10 brand-flavour combinations in five different stores in the Greater Montreal Area. It then weighed four cigars from each pack.

The Coalition removed the packaging and the tips of the cigars before weighing. Finally, for the sake of transparency, all procedures were filmed.



Wild rum, grape, banana, honey, vanilla, etc.  
The Canadian cigar industry does not seem bothered by Bill C-32.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared in July 2010 that "compliance with these rules will be monitored and enforced [and]... if necessary, the legislation will be revisited."

"I am disappointed that, in spite of these promises, Health Canada isn't reacting," said Cynthia Callard, Executive Director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. "If this continues, we will approach the provincial governments. We have not looked at the Canadian situation on this question, but, since we find the same products in the rest of Canada as in Quebec, we can assume that the situation is the same."

Health Canada claims to be doing the necessary follow up. "Inspectors from across the country have collected and weighed sample cigars... [and noted]

that some brands of cigars violate the minimum requirements for packaging of small cigars," writes Health Canada spokesperson Olivia Caron in an email. Health Canada doesn't take these infractions lightly, she adds, but sources quoted by Montreal newspaper *24 heures* conceded that "Health Canada is aware that some manufacturers are having difficulty meeting the weight requirements." As for the special case of STG Canada, Health Canada refuses to comment for reasons of confidentiality.

### The key: predict companies' strategies

The irony of the story? "We specifically targeted products that manufacturers launched after C-32 was adopted," says Flory Doucas, Codirector of the Quebec Coalition. "These new flavoured cigars mimic the brand name and the appearance but were designed to be slightly larger than cigarillos, and therefore never respected the spirit of the law." But the new study shows that they don't respect its letter either.

Anti-tobacco groups are calling for stricter measures. The Coalition's study, released in April, concluded that the government must "anticipate the strategies of the tobacco companies when drafting legislation." Specifically, "it should have banned flavours in all tobacco products, including shisha, cigars and chewing tobacco," says Doucas. "It would have made the law easier to implement and allowed for fewer loopholes. The other solution would have been to declare a moratorium on new tobacco products."

## The 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Tobacco or Health set for Toronto

Where do you go for the latest updates on tobacco control, to network and to rub shoulders with the tobacco control community in Canada?

The Canadian Council for Tobacco Control (CCTC) will host the 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTH) from November 1-3 at the Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre.

The NCTH is the largest meeting of professionals working in tobacco control in Canada. Held every two years, this conference fulfills the CCTC's mandate as it creates and maintains knowledge networks that connect people with experts and the information they need. These connections and newly-acquired knowledge informs effective action to improve the health of Canadians and the global community.

"The conference is well-timed," said CCTC Executive Director Bob Walsh. "In Canada, our federal government's strategy is up for renewal after 10 years of implementation, but perhaps more importantly, the multi-sectored National Strategy has almost completely disappeared. The conference is an ideal forum for the field to determine tobacco control priorities and frame our national call to action."

The theme is *Making the Connection: Knowledge Transforming Health*. The conference will focus on linking policy, programs and research, bring together tobacco control experts from across Canada to network, to exchange information, resources and ideas, to explore new and innovative work and to share proven, effective work. It also aims to build on the lessons learned from tobacco control and facilitate the transfer of knowledge on population health, chronic disease prevention and substance abuse prevention.

Organizers have set a number of objectives for the conference. The first is to facilitate knowledge exchange among researchers, practitioners and policy special-

ists with an interest in tobacco control and other risk factors for chronic disease through a content-rich conference agenda designed to meet a variety of learning styles.

The CCTC also hopes to provide the health community opportunities for networking and collaboration to further provincial and federal tobacco control goals and translate tobacco control interventions for chronic disease prevention.

From 1993 to the present, attendance has ranged from about 350 people up to 747 (in 2005), and close to 500 are expected this year.

### The 2009 Montreal conference

The previous national conference was held in Montreal in 2009 with the theme of *Navigating the Shifting Landscape*.

The two-and-a-half day event attracted over 500 delegates from across Canada. It featured three plenary and four symposia sessions, over 60 oral presentations and an EXPO area featuring exhibits, posters and a marketplace.

It was a particularly memorable experience for the 58 youth, young adults, chaperones and facilitators who attended the youth stream.

There were inherent challenges of organizing such a large scale event with over 245 presentations, coordinated in multiple venues, with simultaneous interpretation in French of some of the major presentations, along with providing lunch for the attendees. In addition, the CCTC encountered two more organizational hurdles: budget restraints and the rollout of H1N1 flu vaccination clinics, which prevented some interested parties from attending the conference. However, attendees left Montreal equipped with the latest knowledge in tobacco control and renewed enthusiasm for their work.

Anyone interested in registering for this year's conference can take advantage of early bird rates. For more information, visit the conferences website at [www.ncth.ca](http://www.ncth.ca) or send an email to [conference@cctc.ca](mailto:conference@cctc.ca).

— by Joe Strizzi, with files from Pierre Croteau

Photo from the Montreal conference in November 2009. We recognize Bob Walsh, CCTC Director, and Dr. Robert Strang from Nova Scotia, Chairman of the event.



## Strengthening provincial smoking strategies

# Ontario takes steps to improve Smoke-Free initiative

JOE STRIZZI

The government of Ontario has taken new steps to help more people quit smoking, ensure that young people don't get addicted and eliminate illicit tobacco.

Building on the progress achieved by its *Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy*, the government will work with educators and young people to keep schools free of smoke and help develop strategies focusing on prevention by introducing *Bill 186: An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act, 2011*, now in its second reading.

Ontario has also introduced legislation to interrupt the supply of illegal tobacco, focusing on tougher controls over raw leaf products, new fines for possession and stronger seizure powers for police.

"I am pleased that several ministries and stakeholders are engaged in this issue and that the government is increasing its investment in the continued fight against tobacco in Ontario," said Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

*"The facts about tobacco use are beyond dispute. It is an epidemic that kills, sickens and burdens health care systems and costs us all money. We cannot win a war we don't invest in and, like other public health issues, tobacco control is everyone's business."*

However, many tobacco control specialists argue that these initiatives are just a starting point.

"These are the first steps in the renewal of the *Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy*," said Michael Chaiton, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto and scientist at the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit. "As the province says, 'the Ontario government is renewing and strengthening its commitment to a *Smoke-Free Ontario* by addressing the recommendations in the October 2010 report of the *Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group*.' However, the *TSAG* report calls for more comprehensive tobacco control measures and this act only addresses the surface so far."

### Preventing youth smoking

The government will provide resources to increase prevention efforts focused on protecting youth, engage young people to develop youth-led tobacco prevention initiatives and conduct research to determine what most impacts decisions by youth to take up smoking and to quit.

### Helping people quit smoking

As a second approach to its latest investment in tobacco control, Ontario will help people quit by providing targeted support for smokers with chronic diseases in hospital settings. The province will also provide increased access to nicotine replacement therapies and education in primary care settings, such as family health teams. In addition, it will engage with pharmacists regarding their role in cessation support services; provide support to people ready to quit smoking by enhancing quit lines and online resources; and work with trade associations, employers and unions to provide information and support to employees who wish to quit smoking.



The Ontario government adopts new measures to fight tobacco smuggling, which offers cigarettes at cheap prices.

### Addressing illegal tobacco

The Ontario government is also set to adopt legislation entitled *Supporting Smoke-Free Ontario by Reducing Contraband Act 2011* to further deal with contraband. Quebec has implemented similar measures in recent years.

The proposed legislation would increase control over tobacco supply by expanding licensing of tobacco growers to include all types of raw leaf tobacco grown or imported into Ontario; allow police officers to seize from individuals illegal tobacco products found in plain view; establish new fine levels for individuals caught possessing small amounts of illegal tobacco; create a new marking scheme for fine-cut tobacco to make it easier for police and the Ministry of Revenue's inspectors and investigators to identify illegal tobacco products; and enable the Minister of Revenue to enter into agreement with First Nations regarding the *Tobacco Tax Act* on reserves.

The Ministry of Revenue investigators and inspectors seized 150 million illegal cigarettes, 978,000 untaxed cigars and 47 million grams of fine cut tobacco between April 1, 2008, and March 31, 2011. Since 1996, over \$18.7 million in penalties were assessed against those violating the Act.

Published by the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, this quitting flyer is available in 27 languages.



New charges range from \$500 to \$15,000 or more, with the possibility of serving two-year prison terms.

*"Illegal tobacco is a complicated issue, it is an issue that is multi-ministerial, multi-jurisdictional,"* said Revenue Minister Sophia Aggelonitis. *"We're working with all our partners and it's important for us to take this first step."*

Michael Perley of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco said the fines are a step forward in deterring individuals who wish to buy illegal smokes.

*"By buying a \$15 bag of cigarettes, you wind up paying \$175 for it. That's a lesson that somebody won't soon forget. The contraband legislation puts important restrictions in place, particularly on the supply of raw materials,"* he said, adding that he thinks the fine won't outright solve the problem.

Critics say that although these proposed changes are a step in the right direction, the province needs to focus on illegal manufacturers to really curb smuggling.



Michael Perley

## BC, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan announce improvements to tobacco strategies

Nicotine replacement therapies will be available to all British Columbian smokers at no cost and smoking cessation prescription drugs will be covered under PharmaCare, Premier Christy Clark announced in early May.

*"This program will provide smokers with a new level of direct support to quit, to live smoke-free and to improve their own health as well as the health of their families,"* said Clark.

Starting on September 30, 2011, British Columbians will have the choice of either nicotine gum or patches to help quit tobacco with a free supply for up to 12 weeks. Alternatively, they may obtain coverage of prescribed smoking cessation drugs through PharmaCare. The program will cost an estimated \$15 million to \$25 million per year, based on the number of individuals who use the program.

Over the coming months, the Ministry of Health will work with groups such as the BC Lung Association, the Heart & Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon, the Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon Division, BC Pharmacy Association, pharmaceutical manufacturers, health authorities and the BC Medical Association to find the best way to implement the program, including how to distribute nicotine gum and patches.

### Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness announced improvements to its smoking strategy in April with 57 actions comprising five strategic directions: integration and building collective responsibility; capacity and community action; surveillance, research and evaluation; healthy public policy; and public awareness and social marketing.

Health Minister Maureen MacDonald said the province wants to reduce smoking rates among 20 to 24 year olds from 29% to 20% by 2015-16. Within the same time period, Nova Scotia also wants to reduce smoking among teenagers from 15% to 10%.

*"It is troubling to hear that one out of five tobacco vendors is still selling to minors,"* MacDonald told reporters. *"This is unacceptable."*

Health officials said they also plan to continue efforts to reduce the overall smoking rate, which was 20% in 2008 and was above the national average of 18%.

*"It is still the leading preventable cause of illness and death in Nova Scotia,"* said Dr. Robert Strang, the province's Chief Public Health Officer. *"How many of us know that more than 1,700 people in our province die each year because of tobacco use?"*

Despite the tobacco control strategy's goals, MacDonald said there is no new funding slated for the program, which has a budget of \$3.6 million a year.

Strang also called for stronger enforcement to ensure stores do not sell cigarettes to minors. *"Improving our compliance rate will mean making sure that when a tobacco vendor is caught selling to minors, they will face immediate repercussions, such as suspension of their license to sell tobacco,"* he said.

The Chief Public Health Officer said the tobacco control strategy will explore taking on the tobacco industry. *"Continuing to work with other provinces around potentially suing for the recovery of health-care costs is a multi-jurisdictional effort and discussion that's been going on for a number of years,"* said Strang.



BC Premier Christy Clark

### Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Health has been working in collaboration with stakeholders to advance the goals of *Building a Healthier Saskatchewan* — a strategy to reduce tobacco use including cessation, prevention and protection.

Key accomplishments of the past year include legislation prohibiting smoking in vehicles with children under the age of 16, around doorways, windows and air intakes of public buildings and on school grounds. Significant effort has been made to support cessation with training provided to professionals from a variety of disciplines to assist people with their efforts to quit using tobacco. Later this year, a series of web-based tobacco related resources for use by school and community educators will be released.

## Minty fresh cancer sticks

# Menthol disguises harsh taste, makes it easier to smoke and harder to quit

JOE STRIZZI

Menthol cigarettes have historically been marketed as a refreshing and smooth alternative to regular smokes. Despite a lack of legislation in Canada and the US regarding the additive, researchers believe that menthol is a threat to public health.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a report in March conducted by its Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC), which made recommendations based on an evaluation of the available scientific evidence on the impact of the use of menthol in cigarettes on public health.

The report by the Advisory Committee found that menthol cannot be considered simply a flavouring additive in tobacco.

*"The availability of menthol cigarettes has an adverse impact on public health by increasing the number of smokers with resulting premature death and avoidable mortalities,"* said advisory panel member and Chief Medical Officer of the American Cancer Society, Mark Clanton, in his report summary.

Menthol's pharmacologic actions reduce the harshness of smoke and the irritation from nicotine and may increase the likelihood of nicotine addiction in adolescents and young adults who experiment with smoking. Furthermore, the distinct sensory characteristics of menthol may enhance the addictiveness of menthol cigarettes, which appears to be the case among youth. The TPSAC argues that the availability of menthol cigarettes has adverse impact on public health by increasing the numbers of smokers, with resulting premature death and morbidity that could be avoided. Consequently, the TPSAC recommended that menthol cigarettes be removed from the marketplace, benefitting public health in the US.

The draft report cites a recent *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* review of 10 previous smoking cessation studies that found that younger smokers who use menthol cigarettes find it especially hard to quit.

The report also found that teenagers smoke menthol cigarettes at a higher rate than any other age group, based on three independent studies with nearly 160,000 respondents. Almost half of adolescent smokers regularly use menthol cigarettes.

The prevalence of menthol cigarette smoking is highest among African Americans across all socio-demographic and smoking-related categories, whether stratified by income, age, gender, marital status, region, education, age of initiation or length of time smoking. As such, arguments of discrimination have been included in the discussion to ban flavouring agents and exempting menthol as more than 80% of African American smokers prefer minty-flavoured cigarettes.

However, the Committee's position of removing menthol cigarettes to benefit public health is just a recommendation. *"The FDA will consider the report and*



Last May's edition of the international *Tobacco Control* journal included a 60-page supplement on menthol cigarettes.

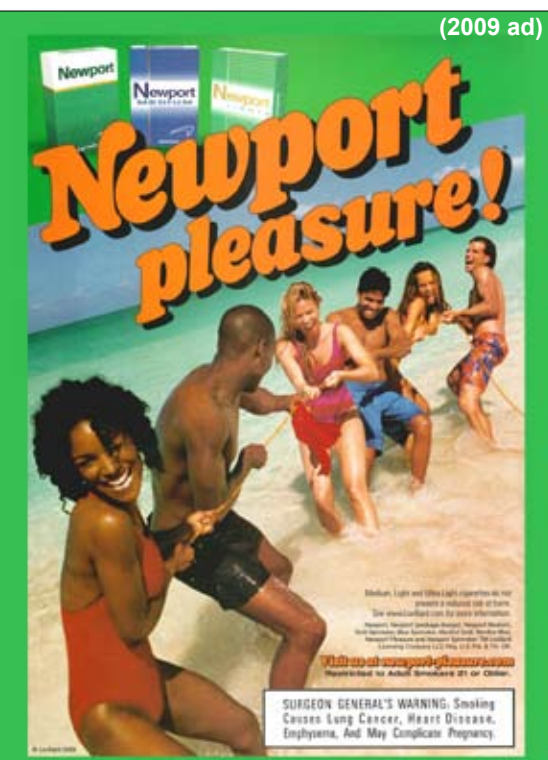
*recommendations of the Committee and continue to review all of the available science concerning menthol cigarettes. The FDA will then make a determination about what future regulatory actions, if any, are warranted,"* wrote the FDA in a press release.

The FDA will also consider a report from the tobacco industry entitled *Menthol Cigarettes: No Disproportionate Impact on Public Health*. The 200-page document's main arguments are that menthol in cigarettes does not change the inherent health risks of cigarette smoking and it has no meaningful impact on nicotine dependence.

## Contradictory industry documentation

In the May 2011 edition of *Tobacco Control* magazine, researchers dedicated an entire 60-page supplement to minty-flavoured smokes simply entitled *Menthol Cigarettes*. More precisely, Director Stanton Glantz and others from the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California, San Francisco, examined tobacco industry documents and published seven independent research papers unearthing facts about menthol cigarettes based on the industry's own research.

The studies' authors concluded that information from industry documents consistently demonstrates that



**Newport is the best selling menthol cigarette in the US.**



**Although only 2% of Canadian smokers would opt for menthol cigarettes, according to Health Canada, the three largest manufacturers offer several menthol brands.**

menthol increases harm from smoking by increasing initiation and reducing cessation in some groups. Menthol is a prominent design feature used by cigarette manufacturers to attract and retain new, young smokers. In addition, the tobacco industry knows that consumers perceive menthol cigarettes as healthier and this was the intent behind their marketing. Emphasizing menthol attracts new consumers including young, inexperienced users who find regular cigarettes undesirable. Tobacco companies know that menthol has sensory effects and interacts with nicotine to produce tobacco products that are easier to smoke and that the amount of menthol in a cigarette is associated with how a cigarette is smoked and how satisfying it is to a smoker.

Thus, they argue that if menthol in cigarettes were to be banned, as the FDA is currently considering, new or experimental smokers might choose not to smoke rather than experience the harshness of tobacco and its irritating qualities. Established menthol smokers might choose to quit rather than face unpleasant smoking alternatives.

Menthol products account for about 30% of the \$85 billion in annual US cigarette sales, according to a Bloomberg report.

The FDA will issue an initial report on its review of the advisory panel's findings this summer.

## Canadian legislation

On October 8, 2009, Parliament passed the *Act to Amend the Tobacco Act*. This amendment aims to protect children and youth from tobacco industry marketing practices that encourage them to use tobacco products. These marketing practices include the use of additives, such as flavourings, that contribute to making cigarettes, little cigars and blunt wraps more appealing to children and youth. They also include availability of little cigars and blunt wraps (sheets or tubes of tobacco) as singles or in small-quantity 'kiddy-packs' and tobacco advertising in publications that may be viewed by children and youth.

Menthol cigarettes have been exempt from legislation so far.

In an email, Health Canada wrote, "a key measure of the Act is the prohibition on the sale of cigarettes, little cigars and blunt wraps that contain a prohibited additive, including most flavours. The measures are designed to protect children and youth by focusing on new or emerging fruit and candy-flavoured

tobacco products that may induce youth to smoke. Menthol-flavoured cigarettes have been on the Canadian market since the 1920s and are used by about 2% of smokers in Canada."

There are currently no plans to ban menthol in cigarettes.

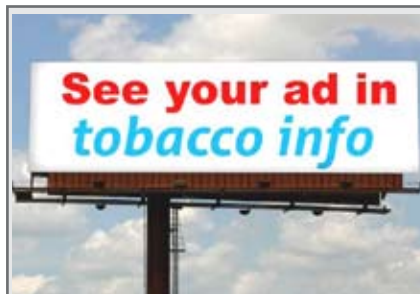


**Over 80% of African American smokers prefer menthol brands.**

## What is a menthol cigarette?

Wikipedia defines a menthol cigarette as a cigarette flavoured with the compound menthol, a substance which triggers the cold-sensitive nerves in the skin without actually providing a drop in temperature. Menthol cigarettes have also been shown to inhibit nicotine metabolism, causing systemic enhancement in exposure to nicotine.

First developed as the *Spud Brand* menthol cigarette in 1924, the idea did not become popular until the Axton-Fisher Tobacco Company acquired the patent in 1927, marketing them nationwide as *Spud Menthol Cooled Cigarettes*. Even then, it remained the only menthol cigarette on the market until the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company created the *Kool* brand in 1933. Not coincidentally, this was one year after *Spud* became one of the top five best-selling cigarette brands. R.J. Reynolds launched the first menthol filter-tip cigarettes in 1950 under the *Salem* brand. Other popular brands include *Newport* (best-selling menthol cigarette in the US), *Marlboro Menthol* and *Misty*. In Canada, menthol cigarette brands from the last five years include *Peter Jackson Menthol*, *Accord Menthol*, *Matinée Menthol* or *Menthol 100's* and *Benson & Hedges Menthol* or *Menthol 100's*.



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# Plain olive-brown packages for Australia

All tobacco product packaging will have the same matte finish and dull olive hue; the same opening and shape; no logo or brand images; standard-size lettering (it's been speculated to be Lucida Sans), style and colour; no ridging or embossing on the carton; and no pattern on the foil. This is how the Australian government sees the packaging of tobacco after July 1, 2012.

On April 7, Health Minister Nicola Roxon unveiled a preliminary draft of a plain packaging bill, along with a consultation paper containing examples of the new generic cigarette packaging. Following the public consultation, which ended on June 6, the Minister will table a bill in due form before Parliament in Canberra.

The Labor Government's new anti-tobacco initiative had already been announced by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at the end of April 2010. Rudd's surprise resignation two months later and his replacement by Julia Gillard, followed by a much anticipated general election in which the economy was the key campaign issue, could have sunk the plain packaging proposal. This was all the more true as the Labor Government scraped through the election with a very narrow margin at the polls on August 21, 2010.

While forewarning opposition amendments to Labor's proposed legislation, Tony Abbott, leader of the opposition, said on June 1 that his Coalition would accept the move to introduce plain packaging for all tobacco products.

An association of tobacco product retailers conducted a campaign in August 2010 on Australian TV against the uniform, neutral packaging requirements, but its efforts had the unintended effect of increasing popular support for the idea, according to *Cancer Council Victoria*. What the public may not have known was that the ads had been paid for by tobacco manufacturers, who had used small retailers as fronts, while waiting for the right to contest the future law before the courts.

Law professor Mark Davison, a leading Australian expert on intellectual property and trademarks, has taken a public stand in favour of uniform and neutral tobacco packaging. Sociologist Simon Chapman, who teaches at the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney, also recommended that the government move forward with the plan. Australia ratified the *WHO Framework on Tobacco Control* in 2004 when Abbott, the leader of the opposition, was Minister of Health.

The Australian plan also proposes covering 75% of the front and 90% of the back of cigarette packages with an illustrated health warning. No other legislation in the world has ever gone so far on any of these points to denormalize tobacco.

## Tobacco industry threatens to slash prices

The tobacco industry has threatened to flood the Australian market with half-priced cigarettes if it is forced to remove branding from its packages.

British American Tobacco (BAT) representatives have told local media that the industry will unveil a series of radio,



Australian Health Minister Nicola Roxon

print and billboard ads in its ongoing fight against the plain packaging laws.

"Could cigarettes halve over time? In the long-term, potentially yes," said David Crow, Chief of BAT Australia. "Basically, more people will smoke and more kids will smoke," adding companies would have to drastically cut prices because no-name cigarettes and tobacco would be more attractive.

But Health Minister Nicola Roxon said these threats are proof of how desperate the industry is to fight the changes. "Big tobacco is fighting to protect their profits, but we are fighting to protect lives," she said. "We are not going to back away from this fight. We have won these fights in the past and we will win again."

BAT Australia has also declared it will launch a court challenge against the proposed plain packaging laws.

— by Pierre Croteau and Joe Strizzi

Sample of tobacco warning, as proposed by the Gillard government.



## New Zealand likely to follow Australian lead

In April, Associate Health Minister Tarian Turia said New Zealand will likely follow Australia and require plain packaging for tobacco products. The government had committed to making the country smoke-free by 2025 and officials are talking to Australian counterparts on alignment and are expected to report back to Cabinet by June 30.

# FDA introduces quasi-moratorium on new tobacco products

*New or certain existing products will require equivalency reviews*

If the tobacco industry wishes to introduce a new product to the market, they will have to prove that it is 'substantially equivalent' to products on the market four years ago.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced on January 5, 2011, that certain tobacco products introduced or changed after February 15, 2007, must be reviewed by the agency, outlining a course of action for marketing such products that its parent company must have evaluated.

In a press release, the FDA characterized 'substantially equivalent' as the products must be the same in terms of ingredients, design, composition health source and other characteristics as an existing, single predicate product or have different characteristics, but not raise different questions of public health.

*"This specific part of the law is meant to ensure that new tobacco products are evaluated by the FDA before they are cleared to enter the marketplace. The law requires the FDA to carefully examine the impact those products may have on public health,"* said Lawrence R. Deyton, Director of the agency's Center for Tobacco Products. *"Products that are equivalent to those which were on the market on Feb. 15, 2007, may be cleared to go to market; those that are not may be prohibited from the market or withdrawn if they are already available, if the changes raise different questions of public health."*

What this means is that in order to continue to market such tobacco products, manufacturers of these products that were introduced or changed after February 15, 2007, including cigarettes, roll-your-own tobacco and all smokeless products, must have applied for equivalency by March 22 of this year. Any manufacturer introducing a product to market after that date must apply to the FDA for equivalency for the new product and must acquire a marketing order before the product can hit the shelves.

The FDA will require manufacturers submit a vast amount of information, including side-by-side comparisons of each new product with its predecessor with respect to ingredients and their levels; design features and other materials; description of the heating source and composition (these apply primarily to cigarettes); and harmful and potentially harmful constituents, among numerous other criteria.

*"This piece of the Tobacco Control Act protects the health of all Americans,"* said US Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. *"It does this by setting a clear deadline for tobacco companies to provide important product information to the FDA so the agency can then begin evaluating tobacco products for any potential new risks to public health."*

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which became law



**New tobacco products cannot be more harmful than those in 2007...**

on June 22, 2009, granted the FDA regulatory authority over tobacco products. A signature element of the law imposes new warnings and labels on tobacco packaging and their advertisements, with the goal of discouraging minors and young adults from smoking. In this case, the law generally affords the FDA the power to deny applications for new products if marketing the products poses an increased health risk. Also, the FDA may deny applications for substantial equivalence if different health questions were raised with the marketing of modified products.

*"No known existing tobacco product is safe and a market order issued by the FDA for these products should never be interpreted as such,"* said Deyton. *"One of the FDA's missions required by this new law is to ensure new products do not pose an increased threat to the American public. These products will not be safer, but we are required by this law to not allow even more dangerous products to cause further harm to those Americans who use tobacco products."*

Over the years, the World Medical Association's moratorium policy has gained significant traction in Canada with groups like Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, Ontario Medical Association, Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control, Quebec division of the Canadian Cancer Society and Quebec Council on Tobacco and Health, urging governments in Canada to implement a ban on all new tobacco products.

- by Joe Strizzi



**WARNING: Cigarettes cause fatal lung disease.**



**WARNING: Smoking can kill you.**

**According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarettes on the US market cause over 440,000 deaths each year.**

**The FDA will soon require new tobacco warnings, covering the upper half of the packs, such as these ones.**

# Study review by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) is a research network that is recognized as a Canadian leader in tobacco control research, monitoring and evaluation. Browse Current Abstracts on Tobacco Control, a monthly list of selected journal articles and reports on tobacco topics, with an emphasis on Canadian authors and research, or visit our online library catalogue to search thousands of citations related to smoking and tobacco at [www.otru.org](http://www.otru.org).

## Pack design and gender

David Hammond, in a review in *Tobacco Control*, found that the pack is one of the most direct ways to appeal to smokers and to provide warnings. Of 94 original articles reviewed, Hammond concluded that the evidence indicated that the impact of health warnings depends upon their size and design, and that pictorial health warnings that elicit strong emotional reactions are significantly more effective. Doxey and Hammond, published in *Tobacco Control*, also found that the cigarettes themselves can provide message signals. Slim cigarettes were more likely to be considered 'female cigarettes.' In an experimental study, fully-branded female packs were rated as significantly more appealing than 'no descriptor' packs, 'plain' packs and non-female branded packs. Female branded packs

were associated with a greater number of positive attributes including glamour, slimness and attractiveness, compared to brands without descriptors and plain packs. The authors argue that plain packaging reduces brand appeal among both genders.

The relationship between gender empowerment and the female-to-male smoking prevalence was explored by Sarah Hitchman and Geoff Fong of the University of Waterloo. The study, reported in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, found that the higher the level of gender empowerment, the higher the ratio of female-to-male smoking in a country. This effect was stronger after controlling for gross national income and income inequality.

## Cigarette litter

A special supplement of the journal *Tobacco Control* grapples with the issue of the environmental impact of cigarettes. Moerman and Potts demonstrate the presence of heavy metals left behind when cigarette butts are soaked in water, while an experiment described by Slaughter shows a single cigarette butt in a laboratory environment is toxic enough to kill fish. Smith and Novotny reveal the tobacco industry's long-standing concern about the cigarette butt problem and how it has responded by shifting responsibility for the job of cleanup back to its victims.

## Tobacco and cannabis

A Swiss study, in *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, found that the practice of adding tobacco to cannabis or 'mulling' was frequent among adolescent cannabis users. While 90% of daily cigarette smokers would mix cannabis and tobacco, a majority of cigarette abstainers also reported frequently adding tobacco to the cannabis they smoke. Researchers analyzed data from 881 past month cannabis users with an average age of 15 years from the 2007 *European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs*. Mixing tobacco with cannabis may represent a significant source of nicotine among youth.



Most teens who smoke marijuana add tobacco.

## Optometrists

Ryan Kennedy and colleagues, in *Optometry and Vision Science*, conducted a pilot study to understand optometrists' attitudes toward addressing tobacco use. Many optometrists were aware of the increased risk of developing certain eye diseases, but few assessed the smoking status of their patients and none had ever supported smoking cessation. They conclude that optometrists should be integrated into the smoking healthcare network that includes medicine, nursing, pharmacy and other health professions. Kennedy *et al.* also published in *Optometry*, show that a low proportion of smokers from Canada (13%) compared to 47.2% of Australian smokers believed that smoking causes blindness. Australia was the only country during the sampling period to have national awareness campaigns about smoking and its effects on eye health.

## Depression

In *Addictive Behaviors*, Weinberger, George and McKee found that smokers with a history of major depression were more likely to believe that smoking had beneficial effects. The authors analyzed data from a population of smokers enrolled in a clinical trial and compared smoking expectancies of groups of smokers who had a history of depression with those who had no history of depression. Smokers with depression were more likely to say that smoking reduces negative effects, boredom and cravings; smoking increases stimulation and social facilitation; smoking helps to manage cravings and weight; and that the taste is enjoyable.

- by Michael Chaiton



These superslims Benson & Hedges are obviously 'female cigarettes.'

Canadian sales have increased 56% in 2010, according to its manufacturer.

## Tobacco taxes upped

In the New Brunswick budget delivered in March, tobacco taxes were increased by \$10.50 per carton of 200 cigarettes, with the provincial tax per carton increasing from \$23.50 to \$34.

For roll-your-own tobacco, taxes are increased by \$5.25 per 200 cigarettes (100g). This is the first tobacco tax increase in New Brunswick since 2002. The 13% HST in New Brunswick (8% provincial, 5% federal) will contribute to some additional price increases.

On April 1, 2011, inflation adjustments to tobacco taxes in the Northwest Territories came into force. Based on the formula used, tobacco taxes increased by \$2.40 per carton of 200 cigarettes and by \$3 per 200 roll-your-own cigarettes (100g). Even before this increase, the Northwest Territories had the highest cigarette taxes in Canada. (See map below.)

The PEI government in April announced in its budget that tobacco taxes will increase by \$5.90 per carton of 200 cigarettes and by \$3.29 per 200 roll-your-own cigarettes (100g). PEI will have the highest cigarette taxes of any province, though the Northwest Territories is still higher.

The Manitoba budget was delivered on April 12. Manitoba increased tobacco taxes by \$4 per carton of 200 cigarettes, and \$2 per 200 roll-your-own cigarettes (100g).

**Interesting novelty: Health Canada proposes that the inner wall of cigarette or small cigar packages contain a series of messages that support quitting, such as this one.**

## New Canadian health warnings

In February, the government of Canada unveiled its proposal for new regulations to strengthen tobacco labelling requirements. The proposed new messages and labelling requirements were published in the *Canada Gazette*, Part I. Public consultation on the proposal closed on May 5.

On June 9, Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq tabled the *Tobacco Products Labelling Regulations (Cigarettes and Little Cigars)*. The implementation date has been modified to 180 days after the regulations come into force at the manufacturer or importer level and 270 days at the retailer level.

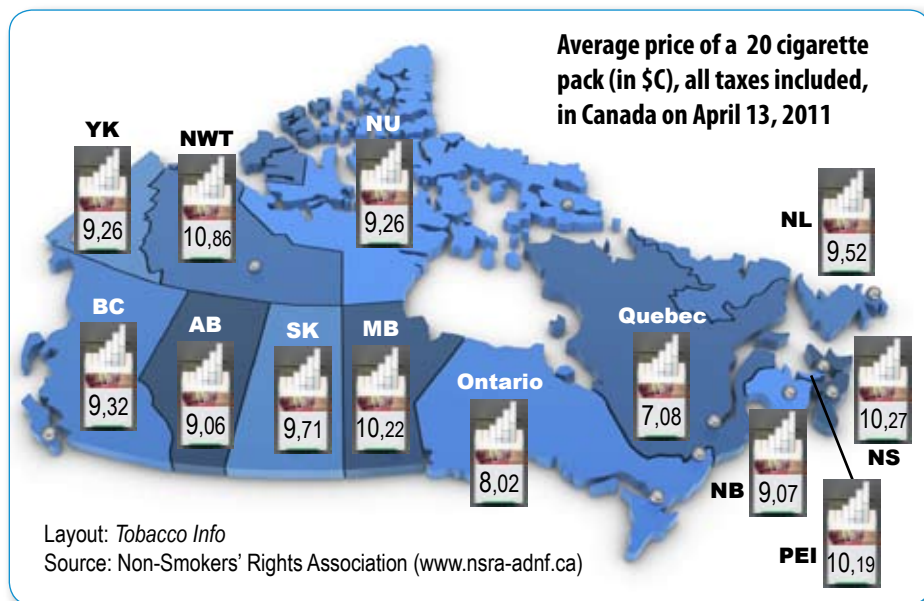
If the regulations do not receive final approval before the summer break, then the implementation will be delayed by a minimum of three months.

Key features of the proposed regulations include new graphic health warning messages covering 75% of the front and back of cigarette and little cigar packages; new health information messages that are enhanced with the use of colour and graphic elements; a pan-Canadian toll-free quit line number and web portal to inform tobacco users about the availability of smoking cessation services, subject to provincial/territorial agreement; and easier to understand toxic emissions statements.

Some controversy surrounded the announcement as it was initially reported that Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq had shelved the idea of renewing and updating health warnings on cigarette packages in the fall of 2010, only to announce in December a plan to improve the health warnings following pressure from multiple health, media and political sources.



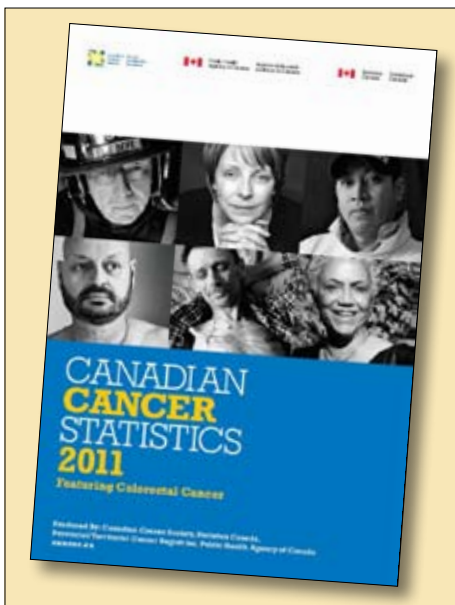
Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq unveiled the first four of 16 proposed warnings last December in Ottawa.



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## CCS releases statistics for 2011

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) released its statistics report for 2011 on May 18 with an emphasis on colorectal cancer, but there were some interesting results in regards to smoking-related cancers.

According to the CCS, declines in the incidence rates of certain cancers have been attributed, at least in part, to a decline in smoking in Canada.

Incidence rates of larynx cancer are significantly decreasing for both males (-3.8% per year) and females (-3.4% per year), while mortality rates for males only show a significant decline of 6.1% since 2001.

Declines have occurred in the incidence rates of oral cancer in males (-1% per year) and mortality rates in both males and females (-2.4% per year and -1.9%, respectively). Incidence rates of stomach cancer are declining in both sexes (-2% per year in males and -1.5% per year in females.)

Quitting smoking also has a positive effect on colorectal cancer, says the CCS. Based on current knowledge, avoiding smoking and minimizing alcohol consumption can help reduce the risk of colorectal cancer in combination with a healthy diet.

Caused almost exclusively by smoking, lung cancer remains the deadliest. It will kill 11,300 men and 9,300 women in Canada in 2011, according to the CCS; an average of 56 deaths per day.

For the full report, please visit the CCS's website at [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca).

## Smoke-free campus

The Non-Smokers' Rights Association (NSRA), along with the Smoking on Health and Action Fund, developed a guidebook to help post-secondary schools go smoke-free. The *Tobacco-Free Campus Guide* aims to help students, faculty and staff increase support for the creation or improvement of tobacco-free measures at post-secondary schools.

Using a selection of the best examples from colleges and universities in Canada and elsewhere, the guide outlines how to develop, implement and support a comprehensive tobacco-free campus, including protection from second-hand smoke and a ban on the use of all forms of tobacco except within designated smoking areas, and if feasible, everywhere on campus; an end to all forms of tobacco sales and promotion on campus; and an ethically and socially responsible mandatory standard that ensures that the institution, its staff and students are not associated with the tobacco industry.

Visit the NSRA's website for more info: [www.nsra-adnf.ca](http://www.nsra-adnf.ca).



## New stamps on packs

New federal tax-paid stamps have been appearing on cigarette packages sold in retail stores. The stamps were required at the manufacturer/importer level as of April 1, 2011.

The stamps are 2 cm x 4 cm. On slide and shell packages, based on packs seen from the three major manufacturers, the stamps have been placed so that the stamp covers part of the bottom and part of the back of the pack. On flip top packages, the stamp has been placed to cover the top right side of the package (placed vertically, to cover the top of the hinge lid opening). The stamp is placed so as to be broken when the package is opened.

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