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Building *Nunavut* Together
Nunavut iuqatigiingniq
Bâtir le *Nunavut* ensemble

Chief Medical Officer of Health's 2018-2019 *Tobacco Control and Smoke- Free Places Act*

Annual Report

INTRODUCTION

The *Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Places Act* Annual Report is a requirement of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) as legislated within Nunavut's *Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Places Act* (TCSFPA). This report summarizes the Department of Health's (Health) efforts to comply with, enforce, and educate Nunavummiut on the TCSFPA. Additionally, the report highlights amendments made to the Act as a result of the new *Cannabis Act*, which came into force in October 2018. This report is for the period of April 1st, 2018, to March 31st, 2019.

High tobacco use rates in Nunavut are a pressing concern for Health. In 2018, for people aged 12 and older, the average smoking rate across the provinces was 16%.¹ Similar data from Nunavut indicates a smoking rate of 62%², and some communities in Nunavut have reported smoking prevalence as high as 84%.³ Furthermore, 51% of Nunavut youth aged 12-19 smoke, which is more than six times the Canadian rate of 7.7%.⁴

High rates of tobacco use are correlated with similarly high rates of serious illness and disease in Nunavummiut. Nunavut has the highest lung cancer rate in the world, and the death rate for this disease is three times higher in Nunavut than the rest of Canada.⁵ Smoking also increases the risk of developing tuberculosis (TB) infection by up to 3.5 times, increases the risk of progression from infection to disease, and increases the risk of death among TB patients.⁶

Given these high tobacco use rates and the resulting impacts on health and wellbeing, reducing tobacco use and minimizing its adverse outcomes remains a departmental priority, and the TCSFPA is an important part of Health's strategy to address this.

BACKGROUND ON THE *TOBACCO CONTROL AND SMOKE-FREE PLACES ACT*

Health has been responsible for the administration of the TCSFPA and its regulations since their enactment in 2004 and 2007, respectively. The TCSFPA has two principal objectives:

- Promote and protect the health and wellbeing of Nunavummiut by ensuring that public places and workplaces are smoke-free; and

¹ The 2018 Canadian Community Health Survey does not include the territories when referring to national averages. As a result, data for Nunavut has to be taken from the 2014 version of the survey; Statistics Canada, June 25, 2019, "Health Fact Sheets - Smoking, 2018."

² Note that the 2016 Lot Quality Assurance Sampling survey on tobacco-use rates in Nunavut indicates that the smoking rate may be as high as 74% among Nunavummiut 16 and older.

³ Government of Nunavut, 2014. "Canadian Community Contaminants Report: Arviat and Cambridge Bay," as cited in Chief Medical Officer of Health, "2015-2016 *Tobacco Control Act* Annual Report," p.2.

⁴ Canadian Community Health Survey, 2014.

⁵ Chief Medical Officer of Health. "2011-2012 *Tobacco Control Act* Annual Report."

⁶ Chief Medical Officer of Health. "2011-2012 *Tobacco Control Act* Annual Report."

- Reduce access to tobacco and related products, especially for children and youth, through restrictions on the display, promotion, and sale of these products.

2018-19 TCSFPA-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

AMENDMENTS TO THE TOBACCO CONTROL AND SMOKE-FREE PLACES ACT

In October 2018, the *Cannabis Act* introduced consequential amendments to the TCSFPA. First, the title of the act was changed from the *Tobacco Control Act* to the *Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Places Act* in order to reflect the Act’s new definition of “smoking”, which now includes tobacco, cannabis, and vaping.

These amendments also created new smoke-free places—where people cannot smoke within 9 metres of the property—and increased the no-smoking buffer zone around work and public place entrances from 3-metres to 9-metres. The smoke-free places include all health facilities; schools; day cares; playgrounds; arenas, sports and playing fields; and public events, like feasts and concerts. These areas were chosen because they are places that children and youth tend to frequent. These changes were made to reduce the public’s exposure to second-hand smoke.

Health also began the process of amending the TCSFPA directly in late 2018. These proposed amendments would strengthen the Act in a number of ways, but the more significant proposed changes are as follows:

- Prohibit price advertising signs for tobacco products;
- Prohibit the sale of all flavoured tobacco, including smokeless products;
- Make a number of GN public housing units smoke-free; and
- Restrict the sale, use, and promotion of vaping products to align with the regulation of tobacco products.

It is anticipated that community and stakeholder consultations will commence in Winter 2020.

TCSFPA AMENDMENTS—EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ENFORCEMENT

On November 19, 2018, Health delivered additional training to Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), who enforce the TCSFPA. The training focused on explaining the details of the new smoke-free places and increase in smoking buffer zones to 9-metres. Health also delivered similar training to health and wellness workers and health care providers throughout 2018/19. This training helped ensure that EHOs, health and wellness workers, and health care providers could communicate the new legislation to tobacco retailers and Nunavummiut in general. Similar training will be offered in the future as necessary.

During 2018/19, Health also released a series of social media posts in October 2018 to coincide with the coming-into force order of the *Cannabis Act*. While the posts generally provide tobacco cessation advice, such as highlighting the Nunavut QuitLine tips or tips for dealing with cravings, several posts explain the details and the application of the new smoking laws. These messages are posted on Health's *Tobacco Has No Place Here* Facebook page, and there are weekly posts scheduled until March 2020.

To educate Nunavummiut on the new and amended smoking laws, Health developed a communications plan. In October 2018, when cannabis was legalized, Health worked with the Department of Finance to release a territory-wide public service announcement outlining the new smoking laws. Health also distributed more targeted communications messages to specific groups, such as health centres.

The next steps of the communications plan involve distributing letters, public service announcements, and radio announcements to all parties that have been affected by the new laws—health centres, schools, hamlet offices, the Northern Company, etc. These communications pieces are expected to be distributed by Winter 2020 and will explain the new laws and outline each party's responsibility to help enforce them. These communications pieces will be accompanied by newly designed no-smoking signs. The signs will address tobacco, cannabis, and vaping and will include messaging tailored to the new smoke-free places and expanded buffer zone described above.

TOBACCO EDUCATION AND COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

The Tobacco Education and Compliance Program (TECP) is designed to improve tobacco retailers' compliance with the TCSFPA. EHOs conduct education and outreach activities with easy-to-understand resources, such as the Tobacco Retailer Toolkit (TRTK), to promote voluntary compliance.

In 2018/19, the following activities helped advance the TECP:

- Additional education and outreach:
 - While every tobacco retailer received an education and outreach visit when the TECP first began in 2017, EHOs continue to provide education and outreach during inspections. The benefit of these inspections is clear: the number of tobacco retailers that were totally compliant with the TCSFPA nearly doubled between 2017/18 and 2018/19, going from roughly 32% to 57%.
- TRTK update and reprint:
 - Minor changes were made to the TRTK based on inspector feedback and updated smoking laws. These updates will help ensure that retailers are able to adhere to the regulations.

- Health data collection software (Hedgehog) training:
 - From November 19 to 24, 2018, five EHOs were in Iqaluit for training on how to use Hedgehog to document their tobacco retailer inspections. Proper documentation of tobacco inspections will help EHOs prioritize future inspections.

CONCLUSION

Effective administration and enforcement of the TCSFPA and its regulations is a crucial component of Health's work to reduce tobacco harms in Nunavut. In 2018/19, improvements to the operations of the TCSFPA were achieved through the following efforts:

- Educating the public and training Health staff on new no-smoking laws;
- Initiating extensive amendments to the TCSFPA.

The objectives of the TCSFPA are to protect the public from tobacco smoke around public places and workplaces and to dissuade youth from initiating tobacco use. The Government of Nunavut remains fully committed to advancing the TCFPA's objectives: to reduce tobacco-related health harms among all Nunavummiut.