

INTRODUCTION

The *Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Places Act* Annual Report is a requirement of the Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) as legislated within Nunavut's *Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Places Act (TCSFPA)*. The *Tobacco and Smoking Act (TSA)* was adopted in Spring 2021 and came into force on May 31st, 2023. The *TCSFPA* was repealed when the *TSA* came into force.

The *TCSFPA* Annual Report summarizes changes to the *TCSFPA* as well as the Department of Health's (Health) efforts to enforce, comply with, and educate others on the *TCSFPA*. This report is for the period of April 1st, 2022, to March 31st, 2023, when the *TCSFPA* was still in effect.

Health's Tobacco and Cannabis Program (TCP), has four overarching goals:

- Prevention: Encouraging Nunavummiut to never start using tobacco and cannabis;
- Protection: Protecting Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke;
- De-normalization: Influencing attitudes around tobacco and cannabis use so that it is no longer considered the norm in Nunavut society; and
- Cessation/Harm Reduction: Encouraging and helping Nunavummiut who want to reduce or quit tobacco and cannabis.

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, while data from Nunavut during that same year for those aged 16 and older indicates a smoking rate of 70%.² Some communities in Nunavut have reported smoking prevalence as high as 84%.³ Furthermore, 51% of Nunavut youth aged 12 to 19 smoke, which is more than six times the Canadian rate of 7.7%.⁴

Tobacco use directly contributes to high prevalence of serious illnesses and diseases in Nunavummiut, such as lung cancer, tuberculosis, and respiratory issues among infants.

¹ The 2018 Canadian Community Health Survey does not include the territories when referring to national averages. Statistics Canada, June 25, 2019, "Health Fact Sheets - Smoking, 2018."

² These statistics (70% and 16%) are taken from two different surveys: the Lot Quality Assurance Health Survey (LQAS) and the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), respectively. Although CCHS does measure smoking rates across Canada, including Nunavut, LQAS methodology leads to more accurate sampling. For example, LQAS surveys Nunavummiut in person and in their preferred language, while CCHS does so over the phone in English or French. These LQAS results are also in line with the latest Inuit Health Survey.

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.

Smoking weakens the immune system and damages the lungs which, among other things, increases the risk of developing more severe COVID-19 symptoms.

BACKGROUND ON THE *TCSFPA*

Health has been responsible for the administration of the *TCSFPA* and its regulations since their enactment in 2004 and 2007, respectively. The *TCSFPA* outlines how, where, and by whom tobacco can be used and sold in Nunavut, who is responsible for monitoring tobacco retailers, and what the consequences are for failing to adhere to these regulations.

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

Tobacco control laws are an important part of Nunavut's strategy to lower tobacco use rates.

2022/2023 *TCSFPA*-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

INTRODUCTION OF THE TSA

To date, Health has focused its tobacco control efforts on education, community programming, and services. To complement its tobacco control strategy, Health has developed the new *TSA* to replace the previous *TCSFPA*. Up-to-date legislation is an important tool to help lower tobacco use rates and protect people's health. However, aside from some consequential amendments introduced in 2018, Nunavut's tobacco control legislation has not been amended in 15 years, and updates are needed for this legislation to be effective.

In 2022/23, the TCP continued the work to develop the regulations for the new Act. The Act came into force on May 31st, 2023.

The *TSA* is organized into four major themes. Each theme aligns with the goals and objectives of the current *TCSFPA*. The new Act incorporates best practices in tobacco control and expands on the current legislation. The changes to the legislation are as follows:

1. Protecting Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke.
 - Make public funded housing smoke-free, including Government of Nunavut (GN) staff housing.
 - Prohibit smoking in vehicles—including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, and boats—with people under the age of 19.
 - Power to appoint existing GN staff as enforcement officers.
2. Preventing people from using tobacco and smoking, particularly children and youth.
 - Ban all flavoured tobacco products.
 - Prohibit all tobacco use within nine metres of school grounds.
 - Give enforcement officers the power to revoke a retailer's tobacco license for infractions.
 - Require tobacco and vape retailers to report every two years.
 - Raise minimum age of sale for tobacco/vape accessories, like papers and pipes, to 19.
3. Reducing the visibility of tobacco and smoking products.
 - Prohibit price advertising signs at stores.
 - Eliminate the requirement that health warning signs and underage-sales signs be placed in stores.
 - Prohibit tobacco distributors from offering retailers incentives related to tobacco sales.
 - Introduce strong regulatory framework for specialty shops.
4. Regulating emerging products, particularly vaping devices.
 - Ban flavoured herbal shisha.
 - Regulate vaping products.
 - Prohibit sales to people under 19.
 - Prohibit sales where tobacco sales are banned.
 - Prohibit flavours other than tobacco.
 - Impose restrictions on ads and displays like those on tobacco.
 - Limit nicotine concentration for vaping products.

This new Act is a crucial step towards improved tobacco control in the territory, and it is a step that Nunavummiut strongly support. The feedback received during community and stakeholder consultations showed that the majority of Nunavummiut are in favour of the changes. Through the *TSA*, TCP aims to provide information on the health risks and support to all Nunavummiut to be tobacco and smoke-free.

COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ENFORCEMENT

In addition to updating the legislation, Health has also been working to educate Nunavummiut and stakeholders on the requirements of the *TCSFPA*:

Social Media - Facebook

Throughout the year, the GN *Tobacco Has No Place Here* Facebook page published several posts highlighting the current smoking laws and supports available for those wanting to quit or reduce, as well as educational content on the harms of using tobacco products. An emphasis was placed on making the content on the Facebook page more interactive to promote participation on comments and questions. Content surrounding the new legislation is continually being created and will be published periodically. This past fiscal year, the Facebook page for *Tobacco Has No Place Here* gained 86 new likes, with a total of 6,137 fans. There were 281 posts throughout the year.

Smoke-Free Places Campaign

The TCP implemented the *Smoke-Free Places Campaign*. The TCP awarded a Request for Proposal (RFP) contract for the design and implementation of a mass-media campaign to inform Nunavummiut about the changes to the legislation, buffer zones and the creation of the smoke-free places. The comprehensive campaign includes mixed media content as well as specific resources for Community Health Representatives (CHRs), Health Centres and Schools.

A tool kit was developed as part of the *Smoke-Free Places Campaign* aimed to inform and support communities. The tool kit consists of information cards (K-cards) that explains Nunavut's new smoking laws, posters to remind people about buffer zones as they enter and leave the building, radio scripts for local radio shows and videos with key messaging on the new legislation specifically smoke-free places and buffer zones. Smoke-free home and vehicle decals were also developed and distributed territory wide.

An RFP was prepared for phase two of the campaign, with a focus on educating Nunavummiut about smoke-free housing and smoke-free vehicles.

Community Cigarette Receptacle Project (Butt Bins)

A pilot project was initiated in Pangnirtung at the health centre to determine the methodology and procedures for a larger territorial initiative. Findings will be gathered

on the delivery of this pilot project to better inform the launch of the territory-wide initiative. The objective of the smoke-free spaces pilot was to gain insights into the behaviour of people who use tobacco, cannabis or vape, and their compliance with the smoke-free bylaws.

Additionally, it allowed for an opportunity to gauge the Senior Administrative Officers' (SAOs) interest in establishing designated smoking areas outside with bins for discarded cigarettes for the hamlet building or other locations in the community. The calls with SAOs helped to determine challenges, opportunities, and materials needed by the hamlets to create a designated smoking area that will be used by community members. Interest in butt bins was expressed by 22 hamlets and efforts to reengage with community level staff are underway.

Training and Education

The TCP aims to increase knowledge and capacity for Health Care Providers, CHRs and Community Wellness Coordinators (CWCs) to deliver tobacco reduction initiatives in their communities.

In anticipation of the legislation coming into force, the TCP worked collaboratively with CHRs to plan educational outreach activities in their communities. Funding will be provided for any planned outreach activities and events with tobacco related programming to highlight two of the new laws – smoke-free homes and vehicles.

Each training session delivered this past fiscal year included highlights of the coming changes to the tobacco legislation. Overall, 122 Health Care Providers and Health and Wellness Workers were trained over 10 virtual and in person sessions. Additional stakeholders were training using TCP's online modules.

Additionally, the TCP presented in January 2023 at the 15th Annual Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation (OMSC) at the Shaw Centre. OMSC is the national reference point for health professionals seeking up to date knowledge of clinical nicotine addiction and treatment strategies. TCP presented *The Nunavut Story: Cultural differences in addressing smoking in the Inuit population* that aimed to explore population-based approaches to smoking cessation employed within Inuit communities in Nunavut. The presentation was well received with 302 participants: 210 in person registrants and 92 virtual attendees.

Tobacco Education, Enforcement and Compliance

Alongside education and training, tobacco retail enforcement is an important component of the *TCSFPA*. Every year, Environment Health Officers (EHOs) aim to conduct two inspections with all tobacco retailers in Nunavut. These inspections focus on education just as much as enforcement; EHOs work with the retailers to ensure that they are aware of the legislation that affects them. Education is an integral part of enforcement. On the one hand, changes in legislation and high staff turnover with tobacco retailers can lead to misunderstandings. On the other hand, by adopting the role of the educator before enforcement officer, EHOs build stronger working relationships with the retailers, which encourages voluntary compliance.

In fiscal year 2022/23, EHOs did a total of 72 inspections by reaching 48 unique retailers in Nunavut. Staff vacancies contributed to a reduced number of inspections below TCP's goal.

To support enforcement efforts, Health is looking at creating and appointing enforcement officers, who would focus on educating and enforcing the smoking laws, while also providing for the possibility to appoint EHOs, liquor inspectors, and others to enforce certain parts of the Act. While EHOs or liquor inspectors would not be asked to enforce every section of the Act, relying on them to enforce certain parts would significantly improve enforcement efforts. The inspection powers granted to inspectors would also be updated to resemble those outlined in the *Public Health Act* and *Cannabis Act*.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of the *TCSFPA* are to protect the public from second-hand smoke, dissuade youth from initiating tobacco use and smoking, de-normalize tobacco use and reduce the visibility of products, and regulate emerging products like vaping devices. To date, Health has focused its tobacco control efforts on education, community programming, and services. Moving forward, the TCP is exploring options that would place greater emphasis on enforcement, as requested during the consultations. The GN remains fully committed to implementing the new *TSA* while providing support for those wanting to reduce or quit using tobacco products.