



# Annual Report

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## INTRODUCTION

As legislated within Nunavut's *Tobacco and Smoking Act (TSA)*, the Minister of Health (Minister) is required to prepare an annual report on the operation of the Act. The Department of Health (Health) is responsible for administering the TSA since its enactment on May 31, 2023, when it replaced the *Tobacco Control and Smoking-Free Places Act*.

The TSA Annual Report provides an overview of Health's efforts in enforcing and monitoring compliance with the TSA and its regulations, including insights on the Tobacco and Cannabis Program's accomplishments, implementation strengths, and challenges. This report covers the period from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, and will be used to inform the ongoing implementation of the TSA.

## HEALTH'S TOBACCO AND CANNABIS PROGRAM AND TOBACCO CONTROL IN NUNAVUT

Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of disease and death in Canada. Nunavut is leading the country when it comes to rate of tobacco use. In 2018, the average smoking rate across the provinces was 16% for individuals aged 12 and older; <sup>1</sup> data from Nunavut for the same year for those aged 16 and older indicates a smoking rate of 70%,<sup>2</sup> with some communities having reported smoking prevalence as high as 84%.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, 51% of Nunavut youth aged 12 to 19 smoke, which is more than six times the Canadian rate of 7.7%.<sup>4</sup>

This high rate of smoking among youth in Nunavut is a pressing concern. Health has taken steps to address this public health issue through tobacco control initiatives under the Tobacco and Cannabis Program (TCP). Health via the TCP has a series of tobacco reduction strategies and oversees regulatory enforcement by monitoring tobacco retailers with the assistance of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). The TCP has four overarching goals:

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<sup>1</sup> 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."

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Community Health Survey, 2014.

- **Prevention:** Encouraging Nunavummiut to never start using tobacco, vapour products<sup>5</sup>, and cannabis.
- **Protection:** Protecting Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke.
- **De-normalization:** Influencing attitudes around tobacco, vaping and cannabis use so that it is no longer considered the norm in Nunavut society.
- **Cessation/Harm Reduction:** Encouraging and helping Nunavummiut who want to reduce or quit tobacco, vaping, and cannabis.

These four goals are supported by six specific areas for action, which are:

- **Training and Capacity Building:** Health care providers (HCPs), wellness workers, and others are trained in tobacco cessation and cannabis harm reduction and outreach techniques.
- **Partnerships and Outreach:** Organizations outside of the Government of Nunavut (GN) who host programming for Nunavummiut are supported with funding and resources to incorporate tobacco cessation and cannabis harm reduction messaging.
- **Policy and Enforcement:** TCP contributes to updating tobacco and cannabis related legislation and taxation, in addition to overseeing the Tobacco Education and Compliance Program for retailers in the territory.
- **Mass Media:** Print, video, radio, online, and social media messaging are used to disseminate information across the territory.
- **Knowledge Translation and Resource Development:** Nunavut specific resources are developed for various stakeholders and reviewed regularly.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Data is collected and analyzed to track program progress.

## NUNAVUT'S TOBACCO AND SMOKING ACT (TSA)

Health has been at the forefront of tobacco control efforts, focusing on education, community programming, and services. The TSA is the key component of the Nunavut tobacco reduction strategy that outlines the regulations governing the use, sale, and monitoring of tobacco, vapour products, and cannabis in Nunavut. It acknowledges the inherent harmfulness of tobacco and defines the consequences for those who fail to comply with its regulations, including individuals and corporations, as well as retailers. Through the TSA, the TCP aims to provide information on the health risks and support to all Nunavummiut to be tobacco and smoke-free. It applies a harm reduction approach by being very specific in its purpose to:

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<sup>5</sup> The term “*vapour products*” is aligned with the terminology used in the TSA. It is more formal and inclusive of the different types of E-Nicotine Delivery Systems. However, “*vape*” is more commonly and colloquially used. The two terms are used interchangeably throughout this report.

- Protect Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke;
- Prevent minors from accessing and using tobacco and smoking products;
- Reduce the visibility of tobacco and smoking products; and
- Reduce the usage of tobacco and smoking products.

The TSA replaced the *Tobacco Control and Smoking-Free Places Act* in May 2023. The updated legislation is an important tool in reducing tobacco use and protecting public health. The TSA reflects best practices in tobacco control and aligns with the territory's broader tobacco reduction strategy. This new legislation was introduced to:

- Strengthen the prevention of tobacco and smoking products use;
- Enhance the protection of individuals who do not smoke;
- Support cessation and harm reduction efforts for individuals who choose to smoke; and
- Reinforce regulatory oversight to reduce the appeal and accessibility of tobacco and smoking products.

Oversight and administration of TSA sit within several divisions of Health. Within Health, the TSA and the *Tobacco and Smoking Regulations* are administered by the Population Health Division. Environmental Health Services, within the Health Protection Division, conducts tobacco and smoking products inspections and investigations. Tobacco retail dealer permits are issued by the Taxation and Insurance Division under the Department of Finance. Finance is also responsible for the retail and licensing of all cannabis products, including smoked cannabis.

The TSA contains changes that Nunavummiut strongly support, based upon feedback received during community and stakeholder consultations while the Act was being developed. These changes are as follows:

#### 1. Protecting Nunavummiut from Second-Hand Smoke.

- The list of smoke-free places includes motorized vehicles when a minor is present. Smoking, vaping, or using cannabis are all prohibited in such areas.
- Public housing and GN staff housing are designated smoke-free.
- The buffer zone around the entrance or exit to a building (including wheelchair ramps, walkways around the building, stairs, windows or other openings, and air intakes) has increased to nine metres.
- The Minister of Health may appoint Enforcement Officers with full powers of peace officers to ensure compliance with any provision of the TSA and its Regulations.
- The definition of smoke has been expanded to include tobacco, vapour products, and cannabis.

## 2. Preventing Youth Access to Tobacco and Smoking Products.

- The sale of flavoured tobacco and vapour products is prohibited, including any product that is flavoured, other than the flavour of tobacco, or any product that is designed to be used to flavour tobacco and vapour products.
- Retailers must submit a report to the Minister every two years since the last report, if applicable; at least four weeks before commencing the sale of tobacco or smoking products; no later than one week after any change in the information contained in the last report submitted; and upon ceasing to sell tobacco and smoking products.
- The minimum legal age to purchase tobacco, cannabis, and vapour products and related accessories (e.g., rolling papers and pipes) is 19 years of age.
- The ban on confectionary products resembling tobacco products (e.g., candy cigarettes) has been extended to vaping products, water pipes, and herbal shisha.

## 3. Reducing the Visibility of Tobacco and Smoking Products.

- Display signs indicating the availability or price of tobacco and smoking products at retail stores is prohibited.
- The international no-smoking symbol must be clearly displayed and not obstructed from view.
- The tobacco and smoking product distributors and retailers are prohibited from offering incentives related to tobacco sales.
- Tobacco and smoking products must be stored out of public view (e.g., under the counter or in an opaque overhead bin).

## 4. Reducing Tobacco and Smoking Products Usage

- The regulatory framework for specialty shops (tobacconists, vape, and shisha shops) has been strengthened. The inside of the shop must not be visible from outside, and only the sale of authorized products is allowed.
- Sales are prohibited in any location where tobacco and smoking products sales are banned.
- Advertising and displaying on tobacco and smoking products is restricted.
- Nicotine concentration in vaping products is capped at 20 milligrams per milliliter.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TSA

In 2024/25, the TCP team continued rolling-out the TSA Implementation Plan with support from an external contractor providing general project management service. The implementation strategy mobilizes five levers of intervention attached to the priority areas of the Program's overarching goals of tobacco control in Nunavut. These levers are as

follows and have been broken down into 19 actions, which are attached to 86 activities to be accomplished by 2026:

- **Roll out a Sustainable Tobacco Communication Strategy:** in support of the TSA's number one goal to protect Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke.
- **De-normalize Tobacco use and Make it Less Attractive in Nunavut:** in support of preventing minors from accessing and using tobacco and smoking products.
- **Encourage and Support Smokers in their Efforts to Quit:** in support of the TSA's goal to reduce the visibility of tobacco and smoking products.
- **Improve Access to Treatment and Care:** in support of the goal to reduce the usage of tobacco and smoking products, Health provides nicotine replacement products, available in the local health centres or pharmacy, at no cost to those who are on their journey to reduce or quit tobacco, vaping, and cannabis use.
- **Monitor, Evaluate, Research, and Disseminate Knowledge about Tobacco:** to operationalize a database and a progressive enforcement program.

Key Milestones as of March 31, 2025:

- Health has carried out a range of informational and awareness-raising activities to publicise the new legislative measures. These activities have reached both the public and specific target audiences including tobacco retailers and proprietors of smoke-free premises covered by the TSA. Communications have included public service announcements, letters, memos, and social media posts.
- Health has continued to invest in educational media campaigns to raise awareness among Nunavummiut of the health impact of smoking and the provisions of the TSA.
- Health designed a mass media campaign to educate Nunavummiut on the TSA, which is anticipated to be released in May 2025.
- Health supported the Nunavut Housing Corporation in implementing the smoke-free publicly funded and GN staff housing initiative. Information cards (K-cards) and magnets were distributed to educate residents and tenants about the new smoking rules including buffer zones and where to find support on their quit journey. Signage designated for smoke-free housing was distributed throughout the territory to landlords to be affixed on housing buildings.
- The "nine-metre buffer zone", as well as smoke-free places rules continue to be enforced, prohibiting the use of tobacco, vaping, and cannabis within smoke-free areas and within nine metres of any building entrances and exits, including walkways, stairs, ramps, windows, and air intakes.
- The updated Tobacco and Smoking Product Retailer Toolkit was distributed to all registered tobacco and smoking product retailers in the territory. A set of four retailer reporting forms has been created to assist retailers in complying with the new TSA and its Regulations.

- Health has developed a retailer outreach plan with the goal of increasing education and engagement regarding the new retailer toolkit and retailer reports requirements.
- Health has collaborated with the Department of Finance to develop new and effective procedures that will streamline the enforcement of the TSA and its Regulations.
- At the request of the TCP, the City of Iqaluit amended the *Cannabis Consumption Tobacco Use and Vaping By-law 863* by repealing and striking out subsections 5.03 and 5.04 of Article 5 of the by-law 863 - Exceptions. These subsections were sending a contradictory message with subsection 19.1 of the TSA. Mainly, Sections 5.03 and 5.04 of the City of Iqaluit bylaw gave individuals the option to use an e-cigarette to sample a product (in a vape shop), while under subsection 19(1)(f) of the TSA, the Act states that no activity occurs at a tobacconist, vape shop, or shisha shop other than the sale of products and their display, advertising, and promotion (i.e., a retailer shall ensure that no smoking activity occurs at the shop, other than the sale of permitted products).
- Health is working to establish an interdepartmental working group with other stakeholder departments. The objective of this work is to address deliverables arising from the enforcement of the TSA and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Health around enforcement actions.

## COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ENFORCEMENT

Through its compliance promotion, monitoring, and enforcement activities between April 2024 and March 2025, Health has been working to educate Nunavummiut and other stakeholders on the requirements of the TSA.

### *Social Media*

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 smoking, vaping, or cannabis use, as well as educational content on the harms of using tobacco and smoking products. An emphasis was placed on making the content on the Facebook page more interactive to promote participation on comments and questions. Content and key messaging surrounding the new legislation is continually being created and published periodically.

Over the reporting period, the *Tobacco Has No Place Here* Facebook page has a total of 6,272 people who like the page, the majority of which are in Nunavut. The top 5 locations are: Iqaluit (705 followers), Rankin Inlet, (417 followers), Arviat (276 followers), Baker

Lake (253 followers), and Gjoa Haven (252 followers). Women are the highest demographic of Facebook followers (60%) from Nunavut communities. This fiscal year, 142,748 people saw the page's posted content, leading to 81,088 total views. Between November 2024 and December 2024, as well as March 2025, Facebook engagement rose, driven by seasonal campaigns like the November Quit Challenge and the March Quit promotions. Higher reactions, comments, and shares show the audience was more active during these months and the November Quit Challenge series' posts had the highest number of reactions and engagement. The Tobacco website (Nuquits.ca) was visited by 5,300 people, with most traffic coming via a paid social media ad, showing strong brand awareness. Website traffic increased in May 2024 and June 2024, likely linked to a mini awareness campaign around the TSA on the World No Tobacco Day. Paid social media was a major driver, bringing more first-time visitors to the site.

### *Alternative Nicotine Educational Media Campaign*

In 2023/24, Health ran the *Alternative Nicotine Educational Media Campaign* to educate Nunavummiut of the harms and risks associated with chewing tobacco and vaping product usage, as well to encourage them to seek support in their efforts to reduce their usage or to quit. Additional work was completed in 2024/25 on an educational resource including "Escape the Vape" ads and a poster to raise awareness about vaping, which was released in April 2024. The campaign ran until June 2024 and was featured on Facebook and Instagram.

A post-campaign survey was conducted in September 2024 to evaluate the campaign's success in reaching communities and in educating the population on the health effects of tobacco and vaping. The survey demonstrated that the vaping campaign led to 1,102,347 impressions and 5,396 link clicks. A hockey-themed advertisement continues to perform the strongest across most advertisement groups, while an advertisement that focuses on a polluted landscape drove more engagement with audiences (e.g., clicks, shares, comments, etc.).

### *TSA Mass Media Campaign*

In April 2024, Health initiated the design phase of a mass media campaign to promote awareness of the new tobacco legislation. The campaign aims to inform Nunavummiut about key regulatory changes, with particular emphasis on smoke-free requirements for publicly funded housing, GN staff housing, and motor vehicles when a minor is present.

Key deliverables of the campaign include:

- Development of a culturally relevant and language appropriate mass media strategy;
- Creation of radio scripts, videos, prints, and social media materials in Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English, and French;
- Production and distribution of posters, flyers, information cards, magnets, signages, and digital assets for communities across the territory; and
- Evaluation and performance metrics to assess campaign reach and effectiveness.

While the campaign was initially scheduled to launch in 2024, it was later rescheduled with a launch in May 2025.

### *Training and Education*

Health offers several training and education initiatives which focus on community-based outreach, capacity building, and professional development and resource enhancement.

In 2024/25, the TCP collaborated closely with Community Health Representatives (CHRs) to plan and implement educational outreach activities in their respective communities. Funding was allocated to 14 communities to support the delivery of locally organized events and activities focused on tobacco, vaping, and cannabis-related programming. These initiatives were strategically aligned with key awareness events such as Tobacco Reduction Month, World No Tobacco Day, and Community Cigarette Butt Clean-Up. By offering culturally relevant and community-specific programming, these efforts effectively reinforced tobacco reduction messaging, supported behavior change, and contributed to the broader territorial objectives of health promotion and harm reduction.

Health prioritized efforts to build knowledge and capacity among HCPs, CHRs, and Community Wellness Coordinators (CWCs) to support the delivery of tobacco reduction initiatives in their communities. Throughout the fiscal year, training sessions were delivered to enhance the capacity of health workers. Each session included a concise overview of recent changes to the tobacco legislation, as well as information on the health risks associated with tobacco, vaping, and cannabis use. A total of 26 HCPs and CHRs participated in three virtual training sessions, while 22 CHRs attended two in-person training sessions.

In January 2025, Health staff attended the Ottawa Model Smoking Cessation Conference to further support the program development and resource creation. The conference provided valuable insights into current evidence-based practices in clinical tobacco

treatment, smoking cessation research, and program design, which have since informed resource development and program planning.

### *Tobacco Enforcement and Compliance*

Alongside education and training, tobacco retail enforcement is an important component of the TSA. Nunavummiut expressed support for increased education on the health effects of tobacco and smoking products use and clearly requested more enforcement. Health employs a progressive enforcement approach that includes a combination of education visits, inspections, monitoring activities, and warnings.

Every year, EHOs aim to conduct two inspections of all registered tobacco retailers in Nunavut. During on-site routine inspections at retail locations, EHOs provide, as needed, information on the provisions being monitored, answer questions, and listen to concerns that retailers raise. It is also possible that EHOs will conduct inspections in response to complaints that they receive. If a retailer is found to be non-compliant with the TSA or its regulations, as a first response, EHOs may issue verbal warnings and consider providing targeted education to induce, encourage, or compel the business to correct the non-compliance. In addition, follow-ups on previously non-compliant items may occur at subsequent inspections.

### *Tobacco Retailer Inspections in Fiscal Year 2024/25*

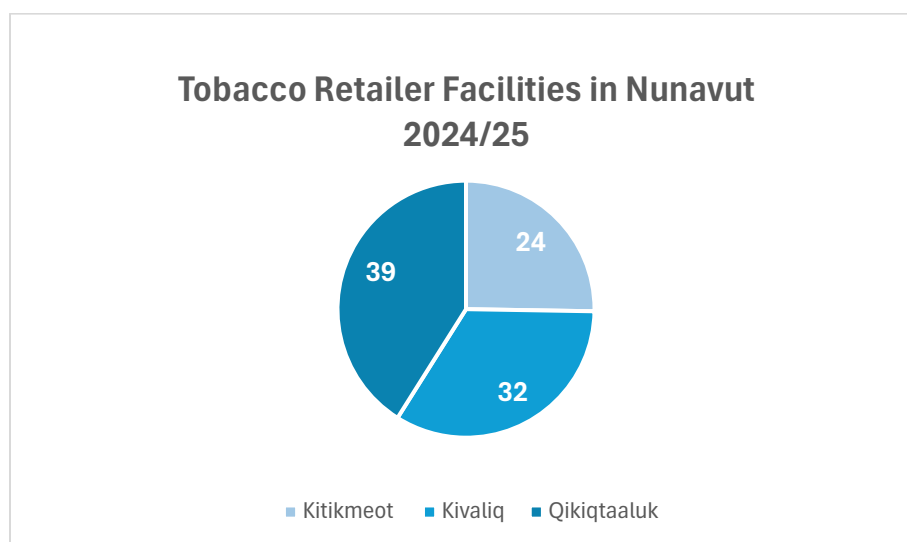
As of this fiscal year, 95 tobacco retailers are actively engaged in the sale of tobacco and smoking products in Nunavut.<sup>6</sup> The Qikiqtaaluk region continues to lead Nunavut in the number of tobacco retailers, accounting for 41% of all tobacco and smoking product retailers in the territory. In addition to tobacco retailers, Qikiqtaaluk hosts two licensed physical cannabis stores, both located in Iqaluit, making it the region with the highest number of tobacco and smoking product retailers in Nunavut.

The total number of active tobacco retailers in Nunavut has declined by 4% compared to fiscal year 2023/24, indicating a modest decrease in accessibility to tobacco and smoking products.

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<sup>6</sup> The number of active retailers is extracted from the Hedgehog inspection software the EHOs use to conduct inspections. This figure does not accurately reflect the list of registered retailers from the Department of Finance due to a discrepancy that will require data reconciliation to resolve.

**Figure 1: Active Registered Tobacco Retailers in Nunavut**



Health regularly conducts inspections of tobacco and smoking product retailers to promote and assess retailers' compliance with the TSA and its Regulations. A retailer is identified as "Not in Compliance" if at least one case of non-compliance with the key legislative provisions is observed during inspection. The number of inspections and the non-compliance rate in fiscal year 2024/25 are shown in Table 1 below. It is important to note that the figures presented in this report exclude alternative smoking products, such as vapour products, as Health has limited information regarding their distribution and sale in the territory.

The Department of Finance confirmed that a small vaping duty payment was received from the federal government in early December 2024, which indicates that either vapour products are available for purchase at the retail level in Nunavut or individuals are ordering directly from suppliers online. Due to the absence of a specific vape permit, Health is unable to determine how many licensed tobacco vendors are also known to sell vapour products in Nunavut during the fiscal year. Unlike tobacco retailers who are required to obtain a permit from the Department of Finance, businesses selling vaping products are currently not subject to the same licensing requirements. This regulatory gap underscores the need for enhanced data collection and monitoring to allow for a more accurate assessment of the availability and oversight of vapour products in Nunavut going forward.

**Table 1: Rate of Non-Compliance with the TSA and its Regulations**

Rate of Non-Compliance* with the TSA and its Regulations		
Provisions	Number of Inspections	Non-Compliance Rate (%) *
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Preventing sales/supply to minors</li><li>▪ Handling tobacco and smoking products requirements</li><li>▪ Prohibited advertising and promotional activities</li><li>▪ Records of steps taken - policies, practices, and procedures requirements</li><li>▪ Biannual reporting</li><li>▪ No Smoking signage requirements</li></ul>	95	33%
<b>*The non-compliance rate is based on the percentage of retailers inspected where at least one case of non-compliance related to the key measures is observed.</b>		

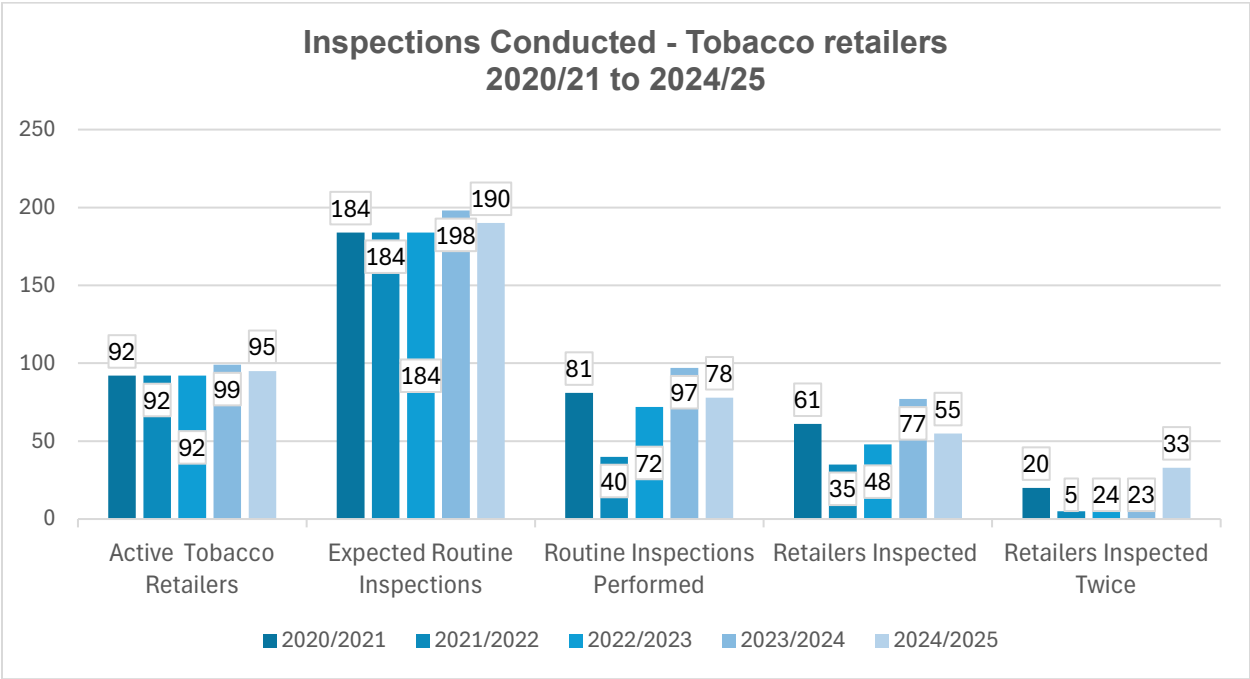
In the past 12 months, EHOs have completed a total of 95 tobacco retailer inspections, including 78 routine inspections and 17 inspections in response to complaints.

The inspections covered 55 (57%) active retailers across the territory, with 33 (60%) of these being subject to two routine inspections. The overall non-compliance rate with respect to the provisions listed in Table 1 was 33%.

On average, each retailer was inspected once. The number of routine inspections has decreased by 19 (20%) in the previous 12 months, reaching 22 (29%) fewer retailers. This figure reflects various operational constraints including the availability of human resources and logistical tools/resources necessary for conducting inspections. The graphs (Figure 2 and Figure 3) below illustrate the trend in inspection activities over the past five years.<sup>7</sup>

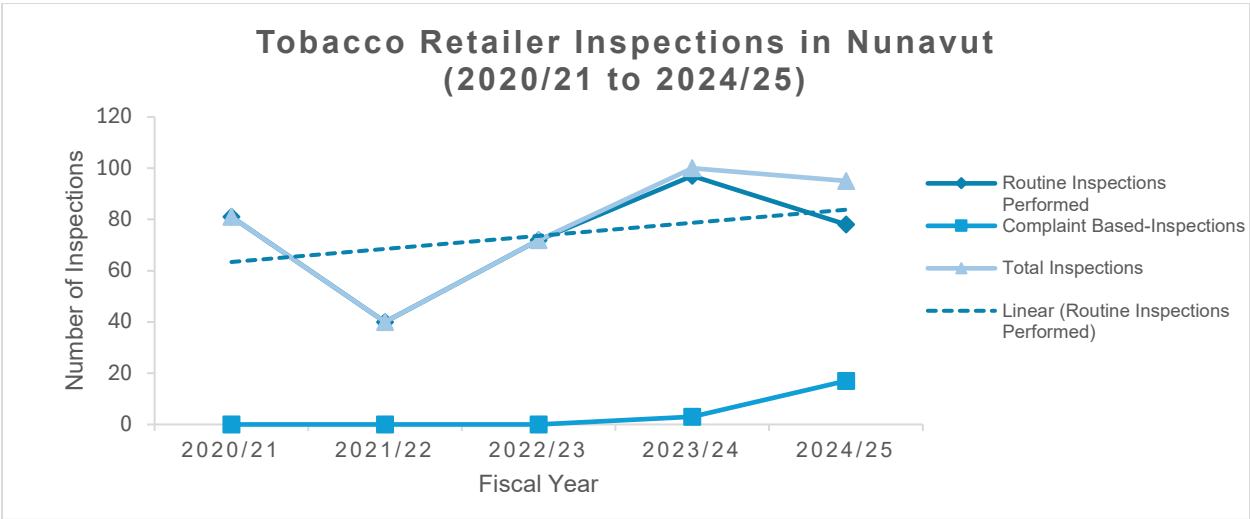
<sup>7</sup> Analysis is based on routine inspections only and does not include inspection EHOs conducted in response to complaints. Routine inspections are a more comprehensive activity.

Figure 2: Tobacco Inspections Activities Over Five Fiscal Years



\*The 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 data are respectively found in the Chief Medical Officer of Health's 20/2021, 2021/22, 2022/23 Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Act Annual Report and Minister of Health's 2023/24 Tobacco and Smoking Act Annual Report.

Figure 3: Tobacco Retailer Inspections Since 2020/21



\*The 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 data are respectively found in the Chief Medical Officer of Health's 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Act Annual Report and Minister of Health's 2023/24 Tobacco and Smoking Act Annual Report.

The decrease in inspection capacity compared to the previous year is largely attributed to competing public health priorities and operational limitations, such as staffing, faced by the inspection teams. EHOs carry out a broad range of responsibilities beyond tobacco enforcement, such as food safety, water quality, and environmental health, which may have diverted attention and resources away from TSA enforcement.

## CONCLUSION

The objectives of the TSA are to protect the public from second-hand smoke, dissuade youth from initiating the use of tobacco, vaping, and cannabis products, de-normalize tobacco use, and reduce the visibility and accessibility of tobacco and smoking products. While a modest decline in the number of active tobacco retailers was observed this year, smoking prevalence in Nunavut remains among the highest in Canada, underscoring that tobacco use is a persistent public health concern.

To date, Health has focused its tobacco control efforts on education and awareness campaigns, community-based programming, and supportive cessation services. With the continued support of key partners, Health remains committed to implementing the TSA and enhancing support for individuals seeking to reduce or quit tobacco and smoking products use. Moving forward, Health's key priorities for fiscal year 2025/26 include promoting compliance and strengthening active monitoring of retail compliance with the legislation to ensure a consistent and effective application of the TSA across the territory.