



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Ontario Tobacco Control Strategy 2011 - 2016

Date:	November 4, 2010
To:	Board of Health
From:	Medical Officer of Health
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Board of Health endorsement of the Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group (TSAG) report entitled "Building on Our Gains, Taking Action Now: Ontario's Tobacco Control Strategy for 2011-2016" <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/TSAG%20Report.pdf> and to recommend that the Premier, Minister of Health Promotion and Sport and Toronto Members of Provincial Parliament take action on this report.

Action on the report's recommendations is particularly urgent because smoking rates have stopped declining. While progressive actions by the Ontario government did achieve a 20 % reduction in consumption before the end of its first mandate, approximately 2.1 million Ontarians continue to smoke and provincial health care costs spent treating tobacco-induced illness have reached \$1.6 billion annually.

The report presents a consensus among tobacco control experts and researchers in Ontario on steps needed to take to further control the tobacco epidemic during the next five years.

The report is based on four key principles:

1. Continue to build on the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy
2. Address both the supply of and demand for tobacco products
3. Address the use of all tobacco products; and
4. Take a "whole of government" approach

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health endorse the Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group (TSAG) report entitled "Building on Our Gains, Taking Action Now: Ontario's Tobacco Control Strategy for 2011-2016"; and
2. The Board of Health ask the Premier, Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, other members of the cabinet, in particular the Ministers of Health and Long Term Care, Revenue and Finance and Toronto area Members of Parliament, to take action on the TSAG report's recommendations as soon as possible.

Financial Impact

There are no direct financial impacts arising from this report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Over the past five years, the Ontario government implemented most of its commitments under the 2004 Smoke-Free Ontario (SFO) Strategy. While the SFO Strategy experienced considerable success, the use of tobacco products remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario; more than two million people in Ontario still smoke, and each year thousands of youth start smoking.

In 2009, the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport and its partners established a multi-sectoral process for renewing the province's tobacco control strategy. The process built on the results of the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy by seeking out the best scientific evidence and expert advice in preparation for a new five-year plan for making Ontario tobacco-free.

The Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group was established by the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport in March 2009 to advise the Ministry in the development of a five-year plan to renew the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy and to inform the Government's New Directions in Tobacco Control 5-year plan. The group reviewed and discussed the changes in the tobacco control environment since the original SFO strategy was initiated, the evidence-based findings from the Scientific Advisory Committee, and the efforts undertaken by other related advisory groups.

The resulting recommendations require multi-ministry cooperation within the Ontario government as part of a whole of government approach as well as additional funding. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends spending on tobacco control, for a jurisdiction of Ontario's size, of at least \$100 million. Ontario currently spends approximately \$42.8 million.

Most of the report's recommendations require action in the first year of the government's new five-year strategy while some key elements are envisaged to be longer term efforts.

COMMENTS

The 2004 SFO Strategy mainly addressed the demand for tobacco products by helping smokers to quit, preventing young people from starting and prohibiting smoking in enclosed public spaces and workplaces. The advice in the TSAG report recommends that, to be effective, a comprehensive tobacco control strategy must be developed, going significantly further to decrease both supply and demand of legal and unregulated tobacco products.

Supply

Tobacco products and the tobacco industry are ingrained into our culture, society and economy. Consequently, the process of de-normalizing and de-legitimizing the tobacco industry and its products must happen at several levels: financial, governmental, and in the social environment. The report includes a plan of action that reduces the presence of tobacco in the consumer environment so that it is easier for non-smokers and smokers to make healthy decisions.

This will be accomplished through:

- A moratorium on the tobacco industry's ability to produce new, non-therapeutic tobacco products and the elimination of all flavoured and smokeless tobacco products.
- Ontario pursuing with the federal government a requirement for all cigarette and other tobacco packaging to be plain inside and out, with the exception of government-approved health warnings.
- Implementing a minimum retail price for tobacco products and substantially increasing tobacco taxes.
- Moving toward a system of designated retail sales outlets which would allow Ontario to reduce the number of tobacco retailers and locations permitted to sell tobacco products, particularly near young people.
- Ensuring the divestment of all provincial pension plans and other holdings of tobacco investments.
- A ban on the tobacco industry from lobbying the government on health-related tobacco policy.

- Partnerships with municipal police and other enforcement personnel to assist in enforcing contraband controls and fund a broad anti-contraband public education program.
- The creation of a “task group” with key partners on tobacco farming to develop recommendations which might include freezing the number of licenses issued by the marketing board; ensuring licenses remain non-transferable; putting a ceiling on acreage; and switching to acreage contracts as opposed to contracts by weight.

Demand

Smoking is not a lifestyle choice and the tobacco industry is capable of using its marketing ability to attract and maintain a steady supply of customers, even in the face of increased awareness of the dangers of using tobacco products. Once tobacco users are addicted to nicotine, they become part of a steady source of demand for tobacco industry products. The recommendations for a comprehensive tobacco strategy in this report continue to build on the need to reduce the demand for tobacco products, both legal and illegal, through a renewed effort to help users to quit, and prevent others from starting.

This will be accomplished through:

- Province-wide media and social marketing strategies to change social norms related to tobacco use, including ads that de-normalize tobacco companies and their products preceding all movies and video games that contain tobacco imagery, and warnings on the packaging of these products.
- Programs to mobilize youth through peer-to-peer approaches to decrease the social norm associated with using tobacco products and to de-normalize the tobacco industry.
- Free smoking cessation medications for all individuals who receive the Ontario Drug Benefit and increased availability of non-prescription cessation medications at the retail level where cigarettes are sold.
- A system where all smokers must be asked, advised and assisted to quit at every point of contact with the health care system, especially in all settings providing services to youth and young adults.
- Amendment of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and Regulation to eliminate smoking of tobacco products in all restaurant and bar patios; all hotels, motels, and inns; all doorways and entrances, and in proximity to operable windows and air intakes and all playgrounds.
- Increased set fines for non-compliance.

- Amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act 2006 to include a disclosure requirement for landlords to prospective tenants declaring whether or not there is a smoke-free policy and to make a non-smoking policy a material term of the lease.
- A provincial tax credit to developers of new affordable housing who commit to designating their developments 100% smoke-free.

Targets

The TSAG report recognizes the importance in establishing measurable targets and monitoring progress over the next five years. The document lists outcomes in six target areas:

- **Reducing Prevalence:**
“Five over five” – a decrease of 5 percentage points over 5 years in the number of Ontarians who use tobacco (approximately 490,000 or 23% fewer smokers).
- **Reduce Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke:**
Banning smoking on all bar and restaurant patios, and Amending the *Residential Tenancies Act* to give landlords the authority to set non-smoking clauses in leases.
- **Increasing Cessation:**
Increase the proportion of smokers who make quit attempts from 9.4% to 21%
Increase the proportion of smokers who quit smoking from 1.6% to 3.6%.
- **Decreasing the Number of Youth Who Try Tobacco:**
Reduce smoking uptake of those between the ages of 12 and 18 from 1% to 0.5% per year.
- **Reducing the Supply of Tobacco Products:**
Ban the introduction of new tobacco products, defined as tobacco industry-branded or non-therapeutic.
- **Health Benefits:**
Decrease tobacco-related disease, measured in terms of total acute hospital care days, attributed to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, lung cancer, stroke, ischemic heart disease and pneumonia by 6.5% (or a five-year total of 204,493 days).

CONCLUSION

In Ontario, there are 2.1 million smokers and each year thousands of youth start smoking. Another 200,000 people use some form of smokeless tobacco products. The use of tobacco products remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. As a result 13,000 Ontarians die each year.

Over the past five years, the Ontario government implemented most of its commitments under the 2004 Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy with public health units playing an extremely active role. The TSAG report recommendations for comprehensive tobacco control represent the consensus of Ontario's leaders in the health field and should be considered essential advice to the Government of Ontario as it moves forward with its commitment to keep Ontarians healthier and address the tobacco use epidemic.

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