

Ontario health groups call for measures addressing contraband tobacco

JOE STRIZZI

Sales of contraband tobacco are widely believed to be one of the biggest threats to anti-smoking efforts, this according to a coalition of health groups. As such, the Ontario government needs to step up to the plate because political inaction is threatening to undermine efforts to protect young people from inducements to smoke.

"The government of Quebec has enacted expanded powers for police, and made supplying raw leaf tobacco to unlicensed manufacturers illegal," said Michael Perley, director of the Ontario

Campaign for Action on Tobacco (OCAT). *"Saskatchewan has limited the [number of] legal brands supplied tax-free to reserves. Ontario must move in these same directions."*

OCAT was founded by five leading health agencies: the Canadian Cancer Society - Ontario Division, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Non-Smokers' Rights Association, the Ontario Lung Association and the Ontario Medical Association, to secure the passage of Ontario's Tobacco Control Act in 1992.

Citing statistics from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's *Ontario*



Student Drug Use and Health Survey, OCAT claims that 60,000 Ontario high school students smoked contraband cigarettes at some point in 2009, while 53% of daily and occasional smokers reported having smoked contraband within the year. These statistics include daily and occasional smokers, as well as anyone who smoked more than one cigarette over the course of the year, but excludes those who simply tried a cigarette.

"This is a conservative estimate," said Perley at a press conference on April 8. *"This survey doesn't take into account the youth who are not in school. Those kids, who in most cases are not in school for socio-economic reasons, are usually more likely to smoke, and therefore are probably more likely to be price sensitive as well."*



Cost is one of the main reasons why youth quit smoking, and with contraband, there is less incentive to quit and it is easier for kids to start.



Medicare cost litigation

Following British Columbia's lead, Canadian provinces have now passed legislation to sue tobacco companies for health care costs related to illnesses caused by smoking. **8**



500 delegates in Montreal

The 6th National Conference on Tobacco or Health brought over 500 delegates to Montreal last November, where, among other issues, a moratorium on new tobacco products was discussed. **12**

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On April 8, in Toronto, health organizations called for more action against tobacco smuggling.



Price and youth

Perley estimates that a bag of 200 contraband cigarettes purchased on a First Nations reserve goes for as little as \$10–15, whereas the lowest legal retail price for that quantity would be \$50–55. *“The results of the study undoubtedly show that youth are exposed to cheaper contraband cigarettes in some way,”* said Perley.

“In high school, it’s very easy to get your hands on contraband cigarettes,” said Emily Butko, a 19-year-old University of Toronto student representing the Ontario Lung Association. *“They’re cheap. Cost is one of the top reasons why youth quit smoking, and with contraband, there is no incentive to quit and it is so easy for kids to start.”*

“Smokers usually get hooked before the age of 20,” said Dr. Marco Buono of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. *“Decades of research show that the high costs of cigarettes are the strongest deterrent for students, but cheap contraband cigarettes take that deterrent away.”*

The numbers

According to RCMP statistics, the number of contraband seizures across Canada of illicit tobacco increased from approximately 25,000 cartons or re-sealable baggies in 2001 to roughly 975,000 in 2009, an all-time high.

Leslie O’Leary, a spokesperson for Ontario revenue minister John Wilkinson, said that about 74 million illegal cigarettes, 294,000 untaxed cigars and 32 million grams of fine-cut tobacco have been seized by ministry investigators and inspectors in Ontario over the last two years.

Take action

OCAT is calling for the provincial government to take the necessary steps to curb the illicit tobacco trade: providing police forces across Ontario with additional resources to enforce restrictions, prohibiting the supply of raw materials to unlicensed cigarette manufacturers, reforming the provincial quota system that allows First Nations access to products from Canadian tobacco companies tax free and mandating a health-based marking on every individual cigarette sold in Ontario.

Although the problem of contraband tobacco is most prominent in Ontario and Quebec, where the density of the population and strategic location of the reserves along the US border makes manufacturing and distribution easier, it is an issue that reaches across the country. The RCMP says that contraband has seeped into western Canada and the Atlantic provinces. Also, the RCMP believes that a significant portion of the profits from illicit tobacco are used to fund illegal drug and firearms smuggling by organized crime.

Perley added that more needs to be done now, as kids start to believe the



Michael Perley, director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco

myth that surrounds the use of contraband cigarettes: that they are natural because they don’t have additives, and they are therefore safer to smoke.

“Additives don’t kill you, tobacco by-products, like tar, kill you,” Perley said.

Numbers not all bleak

The survey does show that the number of student smokers has declined significantly from 28.4% in 1999 to 11.7% in 2009.

However, declining smoking rates, despite an overall downward trend, have hit a plateau since 2007. Although no statistics directly connect the increase in contraband with this trend, Perley believes a correlation does exist.

“Smoking rates have declined everywhere in North America, including areas without contraband issues, but it defies common sense to think that cheaper prices and easier exposure to illicit tobacco have not had some kind of effect on the number of student smokers,” Perley said. *“We don’t know to what extent, but it is not possible that it doesn’t play some kind of role.”*

According to the RCMP, tobacco smuggling originates mainly from Mohawk reserves located in eastern Ontario and near Montreal in Quebec. Illegal cigarettes are sold in plastic bags containing 200 units, or in packs with First Nations’ brands.



PHOTO NSRA



PHOTO RCMP



PHOTO NSRA

Tobacco Info, first issue

We are proud to introduce the first issue of *Tobacco Info*, your magazine for a Smoke-Free Canada. This Canada-wide publication is the sister magazine of *Info-tabac*, which was first printed in French in Quebec in 1996, and is now in its 83rd edition.

You may be asking, why establish a print magazine in the era of the internet, in a field of public health where so much has been accomplished thus far?

The goal of *Tobacco Info* and *Info-tabac* is to reach and inform journalists, elected officials, health professionals and decision-makers in various fields. These individuals may not have the time to conduct internet research themselves. A tangible document, well-illustrated, has a much better chance of reaching and updating this audience. Also, the subjects covered by a 16-page magazine place a significance and priority upon the subject matter.

If you are interested in saving the equivalent of 40 sheets of paper per year, the magazine is also available online.

Has the tobacco control fight in Canada been won? The number of smokers may have declined by half over the last 20 years, but there is still a lot of work to do. The health of the 4.8 million people who continue to smoke is just as important as that of those who were able to kick the habit — or were overcome by it.

The magazine aims to cover every angle of tobacco control, including and most notably, contraband cigarettes, an industry that continues to thrive in Ontario and Quebec, the implementation of plain packaging and smoking cessation programs.

The publisher of *Tobacco Info* is Joanne Brown, formerly of *The Gazette* and *Parkhurst Publishing*. Joanne is responsible for the distribution and advertising related to both publications. The magazine's editor is Joe Strizzi, a journalism graduate from Concordia University, who distinguished himself as a reporter and associate editor at *The Record*, a daily newspaper in Sherbrooke, Quebec. *Tobacco Info* will regularly include articles from Pierre Croteau, editor of *Info-tabac* over the last two years.

10,000 copies

This magazine is mailed, free of charge, to health or educational professionals, individuals or organizations involved in smoking cessation or tobacco control, media and elected officials across Canada. Notably, 6,300 copies of this first issue were sent to 2,100 medical or dental clinics. 1,440 copies were mailed to federal and provincial members of parliament, and their press galleries. Subscription: subscribe@tobaccoinfo.ca or www.tobaccoinfo.ca/subscribe.htm



Tobacco Info and Info-tabac are both available in print and online formats.

Tobacco Info is the sister magazine of Info-tabac, published in French, covering issues mainly in Quebec.

Since Info-tabac went full colour in 2004, headlines have been translated into English at www.info-tabac.ca/recent.htm



The editorial committee, which revises our texts and helps prepare our content for publication, includes a number of Canada's renowned tobacco specialists, including: Michael Chaiton, research associate at the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit; Jocelyne Koepke, operations manager for the Canadian Council for Tobacco Control; Melodie Tilson, director of policy at the Non-Smokers' Rights Association; Les Hagen, from Alberta's Action on Smoking and Health; Jack Boomer, from British Columbia's QuitNow Services; Flory Doucas, co-director of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control. We are truly honoured to have such distinguished counsel.

The initial steps taken to prepare *Tobacco Info* for publication were funded by Quebec's Ministry of Health and Social Services, which, for the last 14 years, has been the primary source of financial support for *Info-tabac*. Support from Health Canada will fund, primarily, the first five issues of *Tobacco Info*, and we are looking to add partners and sponsors to sustain *Tobacco Info* beyond the five, where according to our contractual obligations, advertising is limited to 20% of the magazine.

The *Tobacco Info* team is excited to be a part of the fight for a smoke-free Canada and we wish you happy reading!

Denis Côté, founder and coordinator,
Tobacco Info (2010) and *Info-tabac* (1996)

Pierre Croteau, Joanne Brown, Joe Strizzi and Denis Côté, the Tobacco Info and Info-tabac team. This photo was taken April 26, 2010, two days before our office was severely damaged by a fire! Our team is working from home until the building is renovated.



Economists quash claims of Canadian Convenience Stores Association on impact of 1994 tax rollback

PIERRE CROTEAU

In 1994, Canadian cigarette taxes went down, while tobacco consumption went up. Numerous scientific studies published in peer-reviewed journals using different sources of data all found that the tax drop led to increases in youth smoking and decreases in quitting.

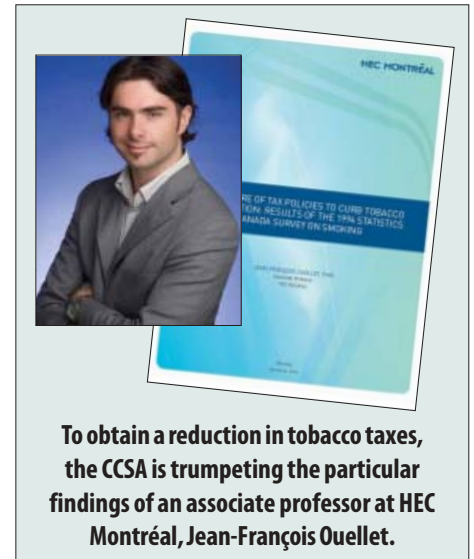
However, the Canadian Convenience Stores Association (CCSA) sees things differently. They allege that the 1994 tax decrease only influenced the supply source for smokers who got their nicotine fix on the black market; with the price drop, they switched to legal, taxed cigarettes. This idea was reinforced in early January by a marketing professor at the HEC Montréal business school, Jean-François Ouellet, in a report that he was asked to produce by the CCSA. As a result, the CCSA proclaimed to the press, "Major tobacco tax reduction in 1994: No impact on smoking rate says HEC Montréal."

This is not the story the numbers tell, according to economics experts Emmanuel Guindon, Pierre-Yves Crémieux, Pierre Ouellette, Marc Van Audenrode and Lisa Pinheiro. They criticize Ouellet's text for methodological weaknesses, distorted facts and far-fetched conclusions. Guindon is a health economics researcher at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and was asked to

analyze Jean Francois Ouellet's study by the Non-Smokers' Rights Association (NSRA). Ouellette and Crémieux are economics professors at the *Université du Québec à Montréal* and Van Audenrode teaches the same subject at the University of Sherbrooke. All three work together as part of Analysis Group Inc., an international economics consulting firm, which was brought into the debate by the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control. Pinheiro, who has an educational background in mathematics and finance, is the company's vice-president.

Coincidence or causality?

In 1995, the peer-reviewed journal *Chronic Diseases in Canada* published research by economist Thomas Stephens, who found that after three years of growth, the number of contraband cigarettes sold fell abruptly in 1994, while the number of cigarettes sold legally climbed steadily. Neither Ouellet nor the CCSA dispute this. However, Stephens' article also showed that the legal vendors did more than recuperate customers from the black market. While contraband sales fell by almost 10 billion cigarettes from 1993 to 1994, taxed cigarettes increased by more than 15 billion units.



So, we see that the drastic decrease in taxes was accompanied by an increase in total cigarette sales. Scientifically speaking, this does not necessarily mean that one phenomenon caused the other, though the relationship between cause and effect in this case has now long been confirmed.

Nonetheless, professor Ouellet concluded that, "Randomness is as good a way as any in determining if a Canadian will change his smoking patterns based

Reduction in illicit trade in 2009

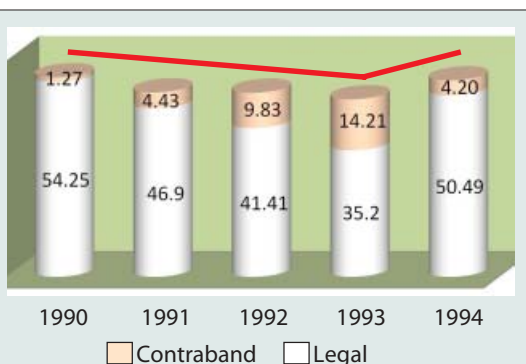
The CCSA fosters the belief that contraband continues to grow. The cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris International, in its annual report states, "In Canada, the total tax-paid cigarette market was up by 3.4% in 2009, primarily reflecting stronger government enforcement measures to reduce contraband sales."

In its annual report, British American Tobacco, the London multinational that owns Imperial Tobacco Canada, the largest supplier in the Canadian market, notes that, "Profit in Canada increased [in 2009], benefiting from a strong currency and some reduction in illicit trade."

At the same time, surveys by Statistics Canada show no resurgence in the prevalence of smoking or in the average consumption of cigarettes by Canadian smokers.



Thanks to police initiatives, smuggling is slowly giving way to the legal market.



Tobacco consumption in Canada, 1990-1994 (cigarettes in billions)

Source: Thomas Stephens 1995, cited by J.-F. Ouellet

on decreased tobacco tax." In lieu of these conclusions, the CCSA proclaimed, "The time has come to decrease excessive tobacco taxes in order to eliminate once and for all, and as quickly as possible, the scourge of contraband endured too long because of the unproven and unfounded fear that it would encourage people to smoke."

Harsh criticism

Emmanuel Guindon, who worked for seven years as an economist at the World Health Organization, notes that, "Ouellet's questionable data manipulation and methodological approach yields results that are not only at odds with published work that analyze the same data set, but that are also at odds with more than a dozen Canadian studies and a wealth of studies conducted in the United States and Europe."

Among numerous criticisms of Ouellet's text, the Analysis Group emphasized that Ouellet ignores the trends that were present in different provinces before the decrease in taxes, minimizes the results showing a statistically significant impact of the decrease in taxes, introduces arbitrary manipulation that distorts the data, neglects to account for variations in the socio-demographic composition of the different provinces, uses erroneous comparisons to contradict data revealing a sensitivity to quantities demanded by changes in price and arrives at conclusions not justified by his analysis.



What serious studies show

Working from the same source of information from Statistics Canada as Ouellet, economist Vivian Ho Hamilton and researchers at McGill University in Montreal, arrived at a diametrically opposed conclusion. In January 1997, they wrote in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* that, "Although smoking rates are declining in Canada, tobacco tax cuts appear to have slowed the rate of decline by inducing more non-smokers to take up smoking and leading fewer smokers to quit."

B. Zhang and a team of public health specialists from the University of Toronto conducted a similar, longer-term study, which was published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* in 2006. They noted that, "Young adults are sensitive to cigarette prices. Reductions in cigarette prices will lead to increased smoking initiation among this group."

Even earlier, in 2002, a pair of economics professors at Brock University, in St. Catharines, Ontario, estimated that the decrease in the sales price of cigarettes in early 1994 led to a 25% same-year increase in the number of daily smokers among 14 to 18-year-olds.

In the same year, three researchers affiliated with the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts, calculated the impact of cigarette price on consumption, factoring in black market sales. The result for Canada: a 10% price drop yields a 4.6% increase in quantity demanded. This cause-and-effect relationship was even stronger among lower-income smokers.



Despite the position of the CCSA, numerous studies have proven that lower tobacco taxes lead to an increase in smokers, and young people are most affected by price.

Prabhat Jha, an epidemiologist and professor at the University of Toronto, and the principal author of a World Bank report on tobacco economics, was asked by the NSRA about the validity of the CCSA's claims. "Evidence indicates an increase in tobacco consumption in 1994 of nearly 10%. To deny the law of demand in economics is the same as denying the law of gravity in physics," he said.

The lowest taxes in the land

The CCSA has asked for a decrease on cigarette taxes, claiming it influences contraband sales. Ironically, Ontario and Quebec, which are most affected by black market sales according to estimates by the CCSA, are the two Canadian jurisdictions where the total level of taxes on tobacco and the price of cigarettes have been the lowest for several years. In Quebec, the provincial tax on tobacco has remained unchanged since the fall of 2003.

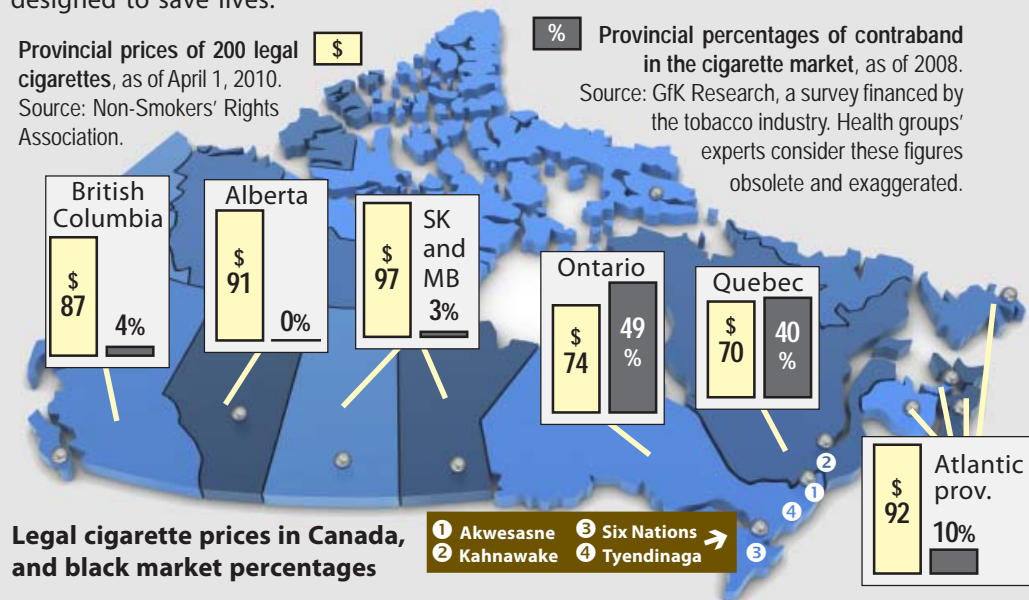
According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, four Native reserves in Ontario and Quebec are the main source of contraband cigarettes in Canada.

Four Native reserves supply smuggling trade

The following map shows that Canadian tobacco contraband is linked with the proximity of four Native reserves, and not with high tobacco taxes designed to save lives.

Provincial prices of 200 legal cigarettes, as of April 1, 2010.
Source: Non-Smokers' Rights Association.

Provincial percentages of contraband in the cigarette market, as of 2008.
Source: GfK Research, a survey financed by the tobacco industry. Health groups' experts consider these figures obsolete and exaggerated.



Legal cigarette prices in Canada, and black market percentages

Federal government subsidizes tobacco farming?

\$300 million buyout full of loopholes

The federal government offered buyout packages in 2008 to Ontario tobacco producers in order to help farmers exit an industry in decline, without the prospect of losing everything they had. As a matter of fact, many of these farmers have exploited a loophole within the Tobacco Transition Program and have continued farming tobacco.

"The federal Tobacco Transition Program was so riddled with loopholes that you can drive trucks through," said Neil Collishaw, research director for Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada (PSC). *"By our estimate, at least one in 10 tobacco farmers were able to collect a buyout, but kept on farming, and the amount of tobacco grown in Ontario has not fallen."*

The PSC say they were approached by southwestern Ontario residents who were outraged by the exploitation of the tobacco exit program that they were witnessing. After looking into the issue, the PSC found a number of inconsistencies.

Media outlets, including *The National Post* and *The London Free Press*, confirmed the abuse after speaking to several locals. In many cases, the buyout recipients farmed the same land as they had always done after relatives or acquaintances, some with full-time jobs in other places, obtained a licence to grow tobacco.

"We were told that licences have been issued to non-farmers, sometimes living in distant communities, who provide legal

cover to tobacco farmers who have been paid to stop growing tobacco," said Collishaw.

Buyout conditions

On August 1, 2008, federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz announced an exit package of \$1.05 per pound of tobacco quota for Ontario's 1,083 tobacco quota holders. This paved the way for the demise of the supply management of tobacco farming, at a total cost to the government of \$286 million.

All but 18 of the province's tobacco quota holders participated in the Tobacco Transition Program, but there were 118 tobacco growers in Ontario in 2009. This means that 100 tobacco producers found a way to circumvent the program, and the province ended up producing the same size crop in 2009 as it did in 2008.

"By our estimate, this means that \$30-60 million of taxpayers' money went, not to assist tobacco farmers in the transition to other forms of economic activity, but, in fact, to subsidize 100 producers to continue to grow tobacco," wrote Collishaw in a letter to Minister Ritz in March of 2009. He went on to write that, on top of the loopholes, tobacco farmers were invited in the fall of 2009, after the buyout, to apply for interest-free loans under the federally funded Advance Payments Program.

Transition not viable?

Fred Neukamm, chairperson of the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Grower Marketing Board, said that the buyout



Neil Collishaw, research director
for Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada

wasn't aimed at eliminating all tobacco production in Canada, and that with major investments in land and specialized equipment, many growers had no viable alternative crop.

"People are stuck with dead and stranded infrastructure, with no viable transitional opportunities, so they are forced to seek alternative forms of employment," he said.

Health groups argue that this isn't necessarily the case as farmers in Quebec, who were forced to take the buyout, are producing everything from ginseng, lavender and hemp to asparagus and sweet corn, strawberries and cucumbers.

Minister Ritz, in a letter to *The National Post* published March 1, 2010, wrote that Agriculture Canada will continue to monitor the situation: *"For many producers, tobacco production is the only job they are trained to do and the program does allow them to work for, or rent their land, to a qualified licensee. However, they cannot profit from tobacco sales and any wages or rent they receive must be at fair market value as though they were engaged in any other type of agriculture."*

Ritz also wrote that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada was scheduled to begin auditing producers in April, to ensure that program requirements are being met, and if the audit process shows any violations, repayment of all the funding will be required, with interest.

- by Joe Strizzi





CCTC announces an improved Tobacco Control Reference Catalogue (TCRC)

Regardless of your role in tobacco control, CCTC and its website give you access to tools you can use:

with a new “faceted search” function. Search results can now be narrowed by year, subject, document type and author allowing for greater exploration of Canada’s most extensive tobacco control collection to address your information needs.

- » The most extensive Tobacco Control Reference Catalogue in Canada
- » Bilingual Tobacco Control Thesaurus
- » Reference services
- » Cutting edge scientific information
- » Innovative practice strategies and techniques
- » Thorough overview of cessation, prevention and protection programs and policies
- » Powerful networking and learning opportunities
- » Insights into tobacco industry tactics



Please visit
www.cctc.ca

to see how we can help you achieve your tobacco control goals.



Medicare cost recovery lawsuits: can public health win?

JANICE FORSYTHE

Provincial governments across Canada are poised to take the tobacco industry to court to recover health care costs resulting from the treatment of illnesses caused by tobacco use.

Encouraged by a massive settlement in the US, Canadian provinces are ready to hold tobacco companies accountable for their actions.

Led by British Columbia, the provinces decided to use the approach adopted by the US Attorney General, which resulted in the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) and yielded an initial \$246 billion over 25 years, among other benefits towards tobacco control.

Before a province can launch its suit in Canada, legislation must be passed to give the province the authority to sue, and a way to manage the lawsuit. Legislation has the added advantage of not having a statute of limitations, which would limit how far back damages could be claimed.

As of this year, all 10 provinces have passed legislation that will allow them to sue the tobacco industry. None of the three territories, who fall under federal jurisdiction, have taken any comparable steps.

Suing the tobacco industry will be a lengthy process. The cost recovery

process started with the passage of legislation in British Columbia in July 1997. BC's lawsuit named Imperial Tobacco Canada; Rothmans Benson & Hedges; JTI-Macdonald; the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council; and several foreign companies, including British American Tobacco, Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds. The tobacco industry challenged the BC legislation all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and despite a few tweaks along the way, it was upheld. Most provinces have used BC legislation as a template because it has already passed the test of industry legal challenges.

The BC suit alleges that "*cigarettes are a dangerous product which, when used as intended, cause illness and death in large numbers of smokers. The magnitude of the health catastrophe caused by smoking cannot be overstated: 50% of smokers die from tobacco related disease,*" and that "*tobacco manufacturers failed to warn consumers of the dangers of smoking, marketed light cigarettes as safe and targeted children in their advertising and marketing,*" this according to the *Smoking and Health Action Foundation Non-Smokers' Rights Associations'* report in March 2009 entitled *Tobacco-Related Litigation in Canada*. The BC trial is scheduled to begin in September 2011, although there could still be unforeseen delays.

New Brunswick and Ontario have since launched similar lawsuits. Quebec and Manitoba have announced their intentions to file suit, both likely in 2010. The other provinces have not yet stated their timelines. Although not all provinces have announced the amount of damages they are seeking, it is estimated that the provinces' claims will be in excess of \$100 billion, based on Ontario's stated claim of \$50 billion.

This is a huge amount, even to highly profitable tobacco companies, which are obviously worried. The tobacco industry has long had a strategy to shift responsibility for their behaviour to others, such as smokers. Their latest tactic is to try to shift the blame to the federal government.



The provinces spend billions on care for tobacco-related illnesses.

Big Tobacco blames the federal government

Tobacco companies have appealed to the courts to force the federal government to act as a third-party defendant that would have to pay their share of damages, if the provinces win. This legal manoeuvre is based on their allegation that the Canadian government has acted as a "senior partner" in tobacco sales by encouraging and being part of the development of so-called "light and mild" low-tar cigarettes (in the late 1960s as an attempt to make cigarettes safer), keeping tobacco products legal and collecting taxes on them for decades. The federal government argues that the process would be inaccurate, and has filed a motion to the Supreme Court of Canada to be removed from the suit. The case will likely be launched in early 2011, and could either await a court judgment or be settled out of court at any point during the trial process.

Master Settlement Agreement

The main lesson from the US process is that there can be more than money on the table in any settlement negotiation. Not only did the US states reap financial benefits, but the MSA also:

- Led to new tobacco control measures such as a ban on tobacco sponsorships, elimination of cartoon characters in tobacco advertising and restrictions on youth access to tobacco (measures already in place in Canada);
- Created the American Legacy Foundation and dissolved three major tobacco industry lobby and front-group organizations;

In 1998, British Columbia opened the door for lawsuits against the tobacco industry.



- Created a state-level enforcement fund and a national public education fund;

- Put in the public domain over 40 million pages of previously secret tobacco industry documents, through the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library.

However, in retrospect, not everyone in public health sees the MSA as a coup for tobacco control. Many states have put the lion's share of their financial settlement into general coffers, and use little of the money to reduce tobacco use, especially now that the economic downturn has left governments strapped for cash, and, companies have found new deceitful ways to market their deadly products.

If the time comes for settlement negotiations in Canada, to avoid the mistakes made in the US, it will be important to have the tobacco control community involved in the process.

According to Rob Cunningham, senior policy analyst with the Canadian Cancer Society, "Public health is a core factor behind the lawsuits. We mustn't allow the tobacco industry to be successful in negotiating a deficient settlement," adding that government needs to be ready to fight this before the courts.

Involvement of Canada's world-renowned leaders in tobacco control in the negotiation process would help ensure that potential loopholes favouring the industry are found and closed before any settlement is finalized.



Rob Cunningham, senior policy analyst with the Canadian Cancer Society

The potential benefits and impact on tobacco control in Canada could include:

- Significant financial impact on the industry, with bankruptcy an eventual possibility;
- Stiff penalties based on company's future share of the youth market;
- Increased price of tobacco products as the industry passes on costs to smokers, leading to more smoking cessation and prevention of youth smoking;
- Internal Canadian industry documents forced into the public domain, which would allow them to be used to improve tobacco control policy;
- Improved public understanding of deceitful tobacco company practices, leading to better support for public policies regulating the industry.

But can public health really win?

Canadian tobacco companies are understandably nervous about these lawsuits and are taking all legal avenues at their disposal to thwart or delay the already lengthy process.

"The arguments that tobacco companies are raising here were raised in the US, but to no avail. This gives provincial governments the confidence that, in the end, they can prevail. It is not a matter of whether the provinces will win, but of how much," said Cunningham.



Janice Forsythe was the executive director of the Canadian Council for Tobacco Control from 1992 to 1997. She is currently principal consultant for Cypress Consulting in Ottawa.

Status of Provincial Legislation and Lawsuits Filed to Recover Health Care Costs from Tobacco Companies, February 2010		
Province Legislation Adopted	Lawsuit Filed Trial Date	Amount of Claim
British Columbia - Tobacco Damages Recovery Act, adopted July 28, 1997 and proclaimed November 12, 1998. Amended in 1998 and renamed the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Recovery Act - proclaimed January 24, 2001	November 12, 1998 <i>Scheduled for September 2011</i>	\$10 billion reported in the media, but not officially announced
Alberta - Crown's Right of Recovery Act, assented to on November 26, 2009	Not yet <i>Not yet applicable</i>	Undetermined
Saskatchewan - The Tobacco Damages and Health Care Cost Recovery Act, assented to on April 26, 2007	Not yet <i>Not yet applicable</i>	Undetermined
Manitoba - The Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, assented to on June 13, 2006	Announced in Throne Speech on November 30, 2009; to be filed in 2010 <i>Not yet applicable</i>	Undetermined
Ontario - Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, assented to on May 14, 2009	Claim issued September 29, 2009 <i>Date TBA</i>	\$50 billion announced on September 29, 2009
Quebec - Tobacco-related Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, assented to on June 19, 2009	Intention to file suit announced October 9, 2009; lawsuit likely in 2010 <i>Not yet applicable</i>	\$30 billion reported in the media, but not yet announced
New Brunswick - Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, assented to on June 22, 2006	Statement of Claim filed March 13, 2008 <i>Date TBA</i>	Undetermined
Prince Edward Island - Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, assented to on December 9, 2009	Not yet <i>Not yet applicable</i>	Undetermined
Nova Scotia - Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, received Royal Assent on December 8, 2005	Not yet <i>Not yet applicable</i>	Undetermined
Newfoundland and Labrador - Tobacco Health Care Costs Recovery Act, assented to on May 24, 2001	Not yet <i>Not yet applicable</i>	Undetermined

Imperial Tobacco proved that nicotine is addictive, then ordered the evidence destroyed

JOE STRIZZI

Canadian researchers have discovered original documents at an archive in Britain with scientific proof of the health risks related to smoking — documents which Imperial Tobacco Canada (ITC) tried to hide from the public.

In a report first published by the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ) in October 2009, a research team led by psychologist David Hammond of the University of Waterloo, in Ontario, revealed the discovery of 60 documents that British American Tobacco (BAT), the parent company of ITC, instructed its Canadian affiliate to destroy in 1992. These papers contain internal scientific studies that the company thought might expose ITC to liability or embarrassment.

"We literally went through millions of pages to find the original documents," said Dr. Hammond. "A memo identifying these documents be destroyed was found [which led to the discovery of the original documents at BAT's British headquarters]."

Knowing is half the battle

Dr. Hammond and his colleagues identified the destroyed documents as scientific studies conducted between 1967 and 1984, which proves ITC long knew about the potentially deadly effects of smoking, and this concealed

knowledge could have had significant implications for governmental tobacco regulation and the future health of Canadians.

"Not only did they conceal these studies, but they tried to destroy them," said Dr. Hammond adding, "The sophistication of these studies is impressive. This helps us understand what the industry really knew."

Among their findings, researchers unearthed three significant studies directly related to issues at the heart of the tobacco control debate in Canada, and which directly contradict the tobacco industry's stance over the last two decades.

The review found that 40 of the 60 documents deal with the cancer-causing and biological activity of cigarettes, showing a link between cigarette smoke and a range of health effects. One such study, entitled *Project Janus*, concluded that long-term inhalation of tobacco smoke led to cancerous lesions. According to Dr. Hammond, this proves that the tobacco company knew the dangers of smoking cigarettes, but chose to suppress the truth about its products.

Another set of documents confirmed the dangers of second-hand smoke, "demonstrating that second-hand smoke [could be even] more dangerous than first-hand smoke," said Dr. Hammond, particularly with cigarettes identified as light or mild.



Psychologist David Hammond of the University of Waterloo, in Ontario

A study of documents examining the effects of filters found that rats exposed to carbon-filtered smoke actually had more particles attached to their lungs than rats exposed to less filtered smoke. Since filters make smoke less irritating, the subjects could tolerate inhaling more of it. The implication for smokers of "mild" or "light" cigarettes is that they are able to compensate for lower nicotine levels by inhaling more of the "smoother," more filtered smoke, which increases their exposure to harmful toxins.

The tests found that the primary outcome in all exposed animals was a consistent smoke-induced change in the larynx (a.k.a., the voice box).

Imperial Tobacco conducted sophisticated studies demonstrating the serious dangers of its cigarettes.



Documents sought for over two decades

Researchers knew of the existence of these damning documents for a long time, but were unable to access them. In 1994, copies of internal documents from the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation, a subsidiary of BAT, and other organizations with connections to tobacco were leaked and studied by Stanton A. Glantz, a renowned US-based tobacco control researcher. His first findings were published in 1995 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA).

In fact, access to BAT's internal documents was made possible in 1998 as the result of a court settlement in Minnesota, making available over 40 million internal documents stored in both Great Britain and in Minnesota. A court proceeding in Massachusetts in July 1998 brought to light an exchange of faxes, dated 1992, between a law firm in Montreal under the service of ITC, and another law firm working for BAT in London, which identified a memo referring to the 60 documents intended for destruction.

Smokescreen

What is most disturbing, according to the report, is that the tobacco industry not only concealed but publicly denied having knowledge of the adverse health effects of smoking.

In 1987, for example, Jean-Louis Mercier, the then CEO of ITC and chair of the *Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council*, testified in front of a House of Commons Legislative Committee that it was not the position of the tobacco industry that tobacco causes any disease.

"This denial came three years after the last scientific study, which was ordered destroyed, had been completed," said Dr. Hammond. "In the 90s, the tobacco industry actively opposed workplace smoking regulations, despite having studies, conducted by and paid for by BAT."

To sue or not to sue

"The significance of our findings is that, for the first time in Canada, our [provincial] governments have documented proof that the tobacco companies acted in bad faith and can use this information in their legal battles," said Dr. Hammond.

In September, the province of Ontario followed in the footsteps of British Columbia and New Brunswick, launching a \$50 billion lawsuit against the Big Tobacco companies, made up of ITC, JTI-Macdonald, and Rothmans Benson & Hedges. Recently, the remaining Canadian provinces followed suit, passing legislation permitting their governments to sue tobacco companies for lost health care costs (see article on page 8 for more).

In 1998, the health group Quebec Council on Tobacco and Health sought certification for a class action against the major Canadian tobacco companies on behalf of nearly two million Quebec smokers. The plaintiffs had hoped to use as evidence the fax, which referred to a memo listing 60 documents that were to be destroyed. Six years later, in 2004, the Quebec Court refused to admit the evidence, stating the memo fell under attorney-client privilege.

Research update by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) is an Ontario-based research network that is recognized as a Canadian leader in tobacco control research, monitoring and evaluation, teaching and training and as a respected source of science-based information on tobacco control. In each issue of Tobacco Info, OTRU will write a review of the latest groundbreaking tobacco studies around the world.

Smoking and immigrants

Jones and colleagues in the *International Journal of Public Health* examined differences and similarities in tobacco use between Canada and the United States. The study found that non-immigrants were more likely to smoke (or use cigarettes) than immigrants. In both countries, young white males with low education were most likely to smoke. In the US, but not in Canada, younger people were more likely to smoke more cigarettes per day.

A study of immigrant children in Montreal led by Jennifer O'Loughlin published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that the amount of time spent in Canada affected rates of smoking. In a cross-sectional survey of children aged 9-12 years old living in low socioeconomic status neighbourhoods in Montreal, the more years immigrant children had lived in Canada, the more likely they were to have tried smoking. The researchers suggest that interventions for immigrant children are needed to prevent adoption of unhealthy behaviours.

Young white males with low education are more likely to smoke.



Breast cancer and smoking

Further evidence of the link between breast cancer and smoking was published in the *Breast Journal* by Croghan and other researchers at the Mayo clinic in Minnesota. The case-control study compared the smoking history of 1200 women who developed breast cancer with 6800 women who did not after their first visit to the clinic. Women who smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime were more likely to have breast cancer than women who had smoked fewer than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime.

A group of Canadian researchers led by Joan Bottorff reported results in *Health Education Research* from focus groups of young women, which suggest that raising awareness of the association between smoking, secondhand smoke and breast cancer, particularly the effects of secondhand smoke, could be an effective tobacco control message.

Secondhand smoke and children

The Royal College of Physicians in England released a report of the convincing evidence demonstrating that passive smoking was extremely harmful to children. Roberta Ferrence argued in an editorial in the *British Medical Journal* that exposing children to passive smoke will probably be unthinkable in the future.

Hitchman and colleagues reported in *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* of a random sample of adult smokers in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, and found significant differences in behaviour and attitudes regarding smoking in cars with children inside. Reports of smoking in cars with nonsmokers ranged from a low of 29% in Australia and the United Kingdom, to 34% in Canada, to a high of 44% in the United States.

➔ Industry research affects results

A meta-analysis of studies performed by Cataldo and colleagues examining the association of cigarette smoking and Alzheimer's disease found large differences in the results of the studies, depending on whether the authors were affiliated with the tobacco industry. The study, published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, found that tobacco industry affiliated research suggested that smoking protected against Alzheimer's, while independent studies concluded that smoking was a significant risk factor for Alzheimer's disease.



Smoking and advertising

In a randomized trial, Shmueli and other researchers from the University of California at San Francisco found that young adult smokers who watched films with smoking scenes were three times more likely to smoke a cigarette within 30 minutes of leaving the film. The results, published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, were the same when controlling for other factors, suggesting that smoking in films affects smoking behaviour and may undermine attempts to quit.

John Pierce and colleagues at the University of California, San Diego, in an article published in *Pediatrics*, found that an American campaign for *Camel No. 9* cigarettes that included ads similar to fashion marketing, was associated with an increase in smoking among young female smokers. Those who had never smoked, but had a "favourite" cigarette ad were more likely to start smoking than those without a favourite advertisement. The proportion of girls reporting a favourite brand, primarily the *Camel* brand, increased to 44%.

– by Michael Chaiton, www.otru.org

Health groups press for a moratorium on the introduction of new tobacco products

At the *Sixth National Conference on Tobacco or Health* held in Montreal last November, the Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control urged government authorities to declare a moratorium on the introduction of new tobacco products.

These organizations believe that the introduction of new brands of tobacco products, or the sale of existing brands in new packaging, usually accompanied by misleading suggestions of being less harmful with the use of lighter colours and other visual cues, are just tricks used by tobacco companies. The alleged goal of these tactics: to lure existing smokers into not quitting and to entice new smokers, meaning kids, to "experiment" with new tobacco products. Scientific studies have shown that this type of experimentation frequently and quickly leads to addiction, which allows the industry to replace smokers who have died prematurely. The groups also showed that industry has managed to circumvent existing bans on lifestyle advertising by launching brand names and variants that in and of themselves stand for lifestyles, such as *Vogue* and *Prestige*.

Some of the 500 delegates from the *Sixth National Conference on Tobacco or Health*, held in Montreal in November 2009.



The Canadian tobacco industry continuously introduces new attractive packaging, like this *Player's* pack, which opens from the side.

The three health groups also oppose the creation of new brands of smokeless tobacco products — a strategy they say is aimed at reducing the effectiveness of smoking bans in public and work places by contemplating and being motivated to quit smoking altogether. Smokeless tobacco — whether a powder, a paste, leaves or in a pouch, and whether it is chewed, snuffed or sucked — is sold in a wide range of flavours that mask the harsh taste of tobacco, often under the same brand name of popular premium cigarette brands, a strategy designed to favour concomitant use of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco and recruit new tobacco addicts. Smokeless tobacco products filled with aromatic additives are not subject to the *Cracking Down on Tobacco Marketing Aimed at Youth Act* passed in October 2009.

Plain and standardized packaging

At the gathering in Montreal, the Non-Smokers' Rights Association (NSRA) distributed a brochure that clearly explains how the effectiveness of health warnings would increase if manufacturers of tobacco products were required to sell their products in plain and stand-

ardized packaging. Currently, for example, packs of *DuMaurier* cigarettes, the biggest selling brand in the country, are designed to open in a way that effectively hides the graphic image of the health warning at the very moment the smoker sees the tips of the cigarettes. This strategy is also used on packs of *Benson & Hedges Super Slims*.

The NSRA report also shows how manufacturers use a variety of colours, sizes and opening mechanisms, among other methods, to differentiate virtually identical brands and to link them with fashions and lifestyles. For example, packs of *XS Extra Slims* cigarettes are the exact size of a Blackberry. Packs of different brands are carried around by smokers as “badges,” as documented by psychologist Melanie Wakefield and her research team from the University of Melbourne in a study published in *Tobacco Control* in December, 2008, and they act as advertisements to young people who have not yet started to

smoke. Some packs are used to advertise other brands, often associating them with a certain lifestyle in order to add prestige, an advertising tactic that is banned in Canada under the *Tobacco Act* of 1997.

As the NSRA points out, scientific research suggests that the price smokers would be willing to pay for their cigarettes would be much lower than it is now if they were sold in plain and identical packages. A market with brands that are indistinguishable from each other would lead to a substantial decrease in market demand. In addition, legal experts have already concluded that the *Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property* provides no legal grounds to which multinational corporations that own the brands could challenge an obligation to sell their products in plain and standardized packages.

“Until there is control of tobacco packaging, there will be no true advertising



On its website (www.smokefree.ca), Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada compare an actual pack of Peter Jackson to a possible plain design.

ban in Canada,” said Melodie Tilson, NSRA’s policy director. Yet, a total ban on advertising and promotion is called for under Article 13 of the *World Health Organization Framework Convention for Tobacco Control*, a convention ratified by 167 countries, including Canada.

- by Pierre Croteau

A conference against an epidemic

In the spring of 2008, the Canadian Council for Tobacco Control (CCTC) staff began organizing the *Sixth National Conference on Tobacco or Health*, themed *Navigating the Shifting Landscape*, which was held November 1–4, 2009.

By late fall, the organizing committee chaired by Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Public Health Officer of Nova Scotia, and the program committee led by Professor Ann Royer, chronic disease researcher for the public health department in Quebec City, were hard at work preparing the goals, objectives and program content.

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

Young tobacco control activists took part in the Canadian conference’s closing ceremony.

www.nctc.ca



Dr. Robert Strang, organizing committee chair



The generosity of sponsors – Health Canada, Johnson & Johnson, Quebec’s Ministry of Health and Social Services, Pfizer, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and the Program and Training Consultation Centre – ensured an affordable conference experience for all delegates.

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

Despite the 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, and even providing lunch for attendees, the CCTC encountered two more organizational hurdles: budget restraints and the rollout of H1N1 flu vaccination clinics, which prevented some from attending the conference. However, attendees left Montreal with the latest knowledge in tobacco control and renewed enthusiasm for their work.

Addressing tobacco addiction while in treatment helps prevent relapse

In the past, substance abuse programs have been reluctant to address smoking addiction, fearing it would interfere with other interventions. However, at the Horizon Health Network (HHN) in New Brunswick, smoking cessation efforts and substance abuse rehabilitation go hand in hand, and quitting smoking may help clients quit other drugs as well.

In May 2008, the HHN in Saint John implemented a tobacco free property policy: no smoking rooms on the property and no smoking outside anywhere on the premises. Although this initiative was met with some reservations, Kelly Evans, the former Zone Manager for the Addiction and Mental Health Program for the HHN, believes the outcomes have been mostly positive.

"People with addictions need help with all aspects of their addictive personalities," said Evans as part of her presentation at the *Second Annual Ottawa Conference: State of the Art Clinical Approaches to Smoking Cessation* on January 22-23, 2010. "If we ignore the addiction to nicotine, then we leave the patients even more vulnerable to relapse [to other drugs] than they already are."

Opponents of addressing a person's tobacco dependence while in treatment for substance abuse argue that addiction clients don't want to address their tobacco use, that doing so adds stress to their initial desire to quit drinking or

doing drugs, and that tobacco free policies are 'making miserable people more miserable.' Other challenges include commitment by staff, scheduling conflicts and low motivation among patients.

Also, cigarettes have been used in the past as rewards at rehabilitation centres, in order to calm patients down.

Studies support co-cessation treatments

According to a 2008 Swiss study published in the *Harm Reduction Journal*, smoking rates in methadone-maintained patients are almost three times higher than in the general population and remain elevated and stable. The study entitled *Barriers to smoking cessation in Swiss methadone and buprenorphine-maintained patients*, conducted by Victoria Wapf *et al.* at the Zurich Psychiatric University Hospital, demonstrated that four out of five patients (78.6%) suffered from co-dependencies.

This rate of co-dependency is common in all types of addiction treatment programs. Given the many negative health effects of smoking, tobacco dependence contributes to the high mortality rates in this patient group, and thus needs to be addressed.

In Quebec, following a suggestion by Health Canada to incorporate smoking cessation interventions in substance abuse rehabilitation centres, the Maison l'Alcove in St. Hyacinthe instituted an intervention policy. A book published by Laval University entitled *Tabac, alcool, drogues, jeux de hasard et d'argent* (Tobacco, alcohol, drugs, gambling and money), outlines the intervention initiated in 2003.

"The importance of integrating a smoking cessation policy rests on three objectives," said Marc Caya, program director at Maison l'Alcove. "The first is to help our patients quit smoking, the second is to educate them on the ill effects of smoking and the most important is to inform them of the negative relationship between smoking and other psychotropic substances."



As a result of the smoking cessation policies, clients receiving some smoking interventions were more likely to abstain from alcohol use six to 12 months after their treatment.

These findings are supported by a systematic review of the effectiveness of smoking cessation policies in substance abuse programs undertaken by Prochaska, Delucchi, and Hall, and published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* in 2004. They conducted an extensive literature research study from 1999-2003, identifying 19 trials for review. The researchers found that, among individuals in addiction treatment, smoking cessation interventions were associated with a significant increase in long-term sobriety compared to those who were allowed to continue smoking.

Seeing is believing

Clients from all around New Brunswick are now seeking out the facility in Saint John, specifically for its tobacco-free services. Further, they are requesting tobacco addiction treatments and feel safer because they no longer go outside at night to smoke a cigarette alone in the dark, or in a secluded smoking room.

"The key here is the effective use of NRT. Our clients are all addicted to nicotine, so it is safer and easier to wean them off of nicotine as opposed to forcing them to quit cold turkey," said Evans during her presentation entitled *Smoking Cessation and Policy Linkage in Challenging Situations*. "We need leadership and commitment from all involved in the process to make it successful."

- by Joe Strizzi

Kelly Evans, at the Ottawa conference on smoking cessation last January





Thanks to a new Canadian law, cigarillos will quickly become less popular with youth.

Cigarillos in packs of 20

April 6 marked the final day of individual cigarillo sales, thanks to the passing of federal bill C-32 in October, 2009. Under the terms of the federal legislation, the *Cracking Down on Tobacco Marketing Aimed at Youth Act*, cigarillos must now be sold in packs of at least 20. These measures were established in order to restrict the marketing of cigarillos to young people. Tobacco control groups demonstrated that smoking among youth had increased as a result of the promotion of flavoured cigarillos, which were attractive and affordable for teenagers because they were sold in smaller, colourful packages and were available in an array of flavours like chocolate or candy.

Later this summer, the question of additives will be answered by a second phase of bill C-32. On July 5, 2010, virtually all flavourings added to cigarettes, cigarillos and blunt wraps, including the addition of sugar, honey or other sweeteners, will be banned.

Tobacco tax hikes

In the provincial budget delivered on March 29, 2010, the Newfoundland and Labrador government increased tobacco taxes by \$2.00 per carton of 200 cigarettes and by \$2.00 per 200 roll-your-own cigarettes (100 grams of tobacco). Tobacco taxes are increased by 1 cent per cigarette and 2 cents per gram of roll-your-own. The province is forecasting that total tobacco tax revenues will increase by \$6 million per year, from \$113 million to \$119 million.

In the Manitoba Budget tabled March 23, 2010, tobacco taxes were increased by \$4.00 per carton of 200 cigarettes and by \$2.00 per 200 roll-your-own cigarettes (100 g). The budget forecasts an increase in annual revenue of \$18 million, from \$207 million to \$225 million.

In the Nova Scotia budget delivered on Tuesday, April 6, the government increased the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax from 8% to 10% effective July 1, 2010, meaning that the total HST will increase from 13% to 15%. The result is that the price of a carton of 200 cigarettes will go up by about \$1.50, and the price of 200 roll-your-own cigarettes (100 g) will go up by about 70 cents.

Effective April 1, 2010, the government of the Northwest Territories will be introducing policies to ensure that tobacco tax rates keep up with inflation.



Tax increases are easier for provinces further removed from certain Mohawk reserves.

The doctor's not always right

Retired psychiatrist, Dr. Jean-Jacques Bourque, former president of Quebec's Association of Psychiatrists, wrote a book entitled *Écrasons la cigarette, pas le fumeur* (Crush the cigarette, not the smoker), which received wide and unquestioning media coverage in Quebec.

Bourque's book, published in January, argues that smoke is less harmful to smokers than the social pressures they feel with smoke-free initiatives or tobacco cessation messages. He also claims that smokers are people with mental illness, but not conscious of their condition, and would be at risk of suicide if they halted the intake of nicotine. As a result, he proposes that health warnings on tobacco packs should include information discouraging quitting.

Bourque's plea depicts nicotine addiction as apparently incurable, and uses a set of unverifiable and often melodramatic anecdotes to justify what he believes has been a "crusade" to crush smokers.

In the book, Bourque sidesteps the dangers of the thousands of chemicals in cigarettes. While he does admit the potential risk of second-hand smoke, he leads readers away from the real damage of second-hand smoking with statistical half-truths. Beyond the first part of the title, the 187-page book is in no way an incentive for anyone to "crush" cigarettes.

Bourque mentions that doctors regularly prescribe drugs more toxic than tobacco, revealing that he himself is a pipe smoker.

Several doctors in Quebec refuted many of Bourque's claims, like Dr. Marc-Andre Roy, psychiatrist with Laval University in Quebec City, who said that his ideas about warning labels were "exaggerated and don't make any sense."

In the book's armory of metaphors, smokers are witches on the stake, tobacco control advocates, the Inquisition and Dr. Bourque himself, Galileo.



The strange book by Dr. Bourque.

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Gates pulls funding for Canadian research

Bill Gates' charitable foundation has cancelled a \$5.2 million grant to the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for planned tobacco control work in Africa, citing disturbing links to the tobacco industry.

The Gates Foundation made the decision after learning that the chair of IDRC's board of governors, Barbara McDougall, was, from 2004 until last month, also a board member of Imperial Tobacco Canada (ITC), a subsidiary of British American Tobacco.

Tobacco control advocates argue that Barbara McDougall's appointment to the IDRC's board was a blatant conflict of interest and is in direct violation of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which seeks to prevent tobacco industry officials from influencing government public health policy. Canada ratified the treaty in 2004.

The press release announcing McDougall's appointment to the IDRC board did not mention her directorship of ITC, nor is it mentioned in her bio on the IDRC website.



Bill Gates



Barbara McDougall

World No Tobacco Day

"Gender and tobacco with an emphasis on marketing to women" will be the theme for the World No Tobacco Day, which will take place on May 31, 2010.

"Controlling the epidemic of tobacco among women is an important part of any comprehensive strategy. World No Tobacco Day 2010 will be designed to draw particular attention to the harmful effects of tobacco marketing towards women and girls," states the World Health Organization in a press release.

Women comprise about 20% of the world's more than one billion smokers. However, female rates are on the rise, while male smoking rates have peaked. Women represent a very important opportunity for the tobacco industry, which needs to recruit new users to replace the one-third to one-half of current users who will die from tobacco-related diseases.

Data from the new WHO report, *Women and health: today's evidence, tomorrow's agenda*, shows that globally about 7% of adolescent girls smoke cigarettes as compared to 12% of adolescent boys. In some primarily developed countries, almost as many girls smoke as boys.

The global health treaty, the WHO *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control*, which took effect in 2005, expresses alarm at the "increase in smoking and other forms of tobacco consumption by women and young girls worldwide."

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31 MAY

Workers in India rolling beedi cigarettes.

Photo WHO



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