



SASKATCHEWAN
COALITION
FOR TOBACCO
REDUCTION

**'Best Practices'
in Tobacco
Control**

*a Vision for
Saskatchewan*

Saskatchewan Coalition for
Tobacco Reduction

2004

The Health Burden of Tobacco in Saskatchewan

Four Saskatchewan residents die every day due to tobacco-related diseases.

Tobacco-related deaths represent approximately 20% of all deaths in Saskatchewan¹ with 1,600 residents a year dying prematurely² because of tobacco-related diseases.

These deaths are totally preventable.

The Economic Burden of Tobacco

Taxes and other revenues generated by tobacco are far less than tobacco's economic burden to the province. The total impact of tobacco use in Saskatchewan is estimated at \$265.03 million in 1997 dollars. This includes the direct costs of \$86.03 million and indirect costs of \$179 million.³

In contrast, the province of Saskatchewan's tobacco tax revenue is much less at \$158,472,000⁴ in 2002-03.

Addiction of Youth

Tobacco, a highly addictive and deadly product, kills half its regular users prematurely. The tobacco industry makes up for this loss of customers due to death and quitting by addicting new customers. As a *Report of the Surgeon General* states "early addiction is the chief mechanism for renewing the pool of smokers".⁵

Eighty-five per cent of the tobacco industry's new customers are children and youth. Research shows youth tend to overestimate the number of people who smoke and underestimate the extent to which tobacco is addictive. Although many young people think it's safe to smoke for one or two years, symptoms of dependence begin 21 to 183 days after beginning smoking.⁶

New Information on 'Best Practices' in Tobacco Control

The last five years has seen a growth in information about 'Best Practices' in tobacco control. Research studies have provided proof that some tobacco reduction initiatives are far more effective than others.

What are 'Best Practices' in Tobacco Control?

'Best Practices' are those strategies shown by research to be **most effective** in reducing smoking rates, tobacco-related deaths and youth initiation.

Canadian provinces that have implemented 'best practices' have seen reductions in smoking rates. For example, British Columbia and Ontario both have introduced 'best practices' and are benefiting through reduced smoking rates (16% and 20% respectively). These will result in reduced health care costs for these provinces.

Reducing the number of Saskatchewan residents who die from tobacco products can only be achieved through implementation of a **comprehensive strategy of the most effective 'best practices'**.

Which 'Best Practices' are most effective?

The *World Health Organization* reports that **"The most effective measures to reduce tobacco use are regulatory"** and a synergistic effect occurs when several strategies are implemented.⁹

Research shows the most effective 'Best Practices' are:

- **increasing tobacco taxation.**
- **smoke-free public places and workplaces.**
- **banning tobacco advertising and promotion.**
- **counter-advertising including denormalization of tobacco industry activities.**

Before information about 'Best Practices' in tobacco control was known, many organizations focused on education and smoking cessation, which, in the absence of 'Best Practices', are rarely effective in reducing smoking rates.

The most effective 'Best Practices', how they work & Saskatchewan's progress

1. Increasing Tobacco Taxation

Increases in tobacco taxes have been shown to be the **most effective 'best practice'** to reduce tobacco use, especially among children. Children and youth, the most price sensitive of all age groups, react to tax increases by not beginning to buy tobacco products or buying less.

The *Canadian Cancer Society* says for every 10% increase in the real (after-inflation) price, there is a corresponding 4% decrease in sales.¹⁰

In March, 2002, Saskatchewan increased its tobacco tax on a carton of cigarettes from \$17.20 to \$32.00. Partly because of this, a 21% decrease in consumption resulted, a reflection of the number of people who quit smoking or reduced their tobacco use.¹¹ In March, 2004, provincial tobacco taxes were increased by \$3.00.

2. Smoke-Free Public Places and Workplaces

The *World Health Organization* states:

"The scientific community is united in its conclusion that exposure of nonsmokers to tobacco smoke causes serious harm and even death from a variety of causes...there is no known "threshold" or safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke...the mere separation of smokers and nonsmokers within the same air space does not protect nonsmokers from harm regardless of the ventilation system used."

As well as protecting people from second-hand smoke, smoking bans have an additional benefit of reducing smoking rates by increasing smoking cessation and decreasing smoking initiation. A 1999 study indicates that laws that create smoke-free workplaces and public places are associated with declines in consumption of 13% to 22%.¹²

Smoke-Free Public Places

Under the Saskatchewan *Tobacco Control Act* (2002) all enclosed public places became smoke-free except bars, restaurants, bingo establishments, billiard halls, bowling facilities and casinos which are now required to be 60% non-smoking.

Municipalities are empowered to develop smoking bylaws which exceed provincial standards. Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Humboldt, Yorkton and Prince Albert have passed 100% smoke-free bylaws.

Comprehensive provincial legislation to ban smoking in all public places would effectively protect all Saskatchewan residents from second-hand smoke in public places.

Smoke-Free Workplaces

Smoke-free workplaces protect workers from increased health hazards due to prolonged exposure to second-hand smoke. They also offer economic advantages since they reduce maintenance and insurance costs, reduce employee illness and can increase business as in the hospitality sector. New research shows that smoke-free workplaces result in nearly a 30% drop in consumption among workers who smoke.¹³

Smoke-free workplaces also have a far-reaching effect in the community. They have been shown to reduce youth smoking rates likely through changing social norms and reducing role modeling.

A Health Canada survey indicates that half of Saskatchewan workers are still at risk from second-hand smoke in the workplace.¹⁴

Saskatchewan's current workplace regulations, *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 1996*, does not adequately protect workers from second-hand smoke. Saskatchewan Labour has announced it will review these regulations in 2004-05. Health regions and organizations are encouraged to speak out in favor of protecting Saskatchewan workers through 100% smoke-free workplaces with no exemptions and no smoking rooms.

Ventilation and smoking rooms don't work

There is no ventilation system that can adequately protect workers from the health hazards of second-hand smoke. James Repace, an international expert in ventilation and second-hand smoke, recommends not having smoking rooms because:

- When doors open to let people in and out, second-hand smoke invariably escapes to nearby areas such that they are not smoke-free.
- The financial cost of administering and enforcing smoking rooms is a nightmare with technical experts being required to inspect the rooms.
- Workers in hospitality facilities invariably have to serve customers in these rooms or clean them. Smoking rooms put employees who must enter them at risk.
- The option of smoking rooms creates an uneven playing field between richer and poorer businesses. It gives an advantage to richer businesses that can afford them while burdening smaller poorer businesses that cannot.
- In some jurisdictions, employees are told that working in smoking rooms is voluntary. However, workers have reported pressure from supervisors and co-workers to work in them.

3. Banning Tobacco Advertising and Promotion

The extent of promotion of tobacco products influences the level of tobacco use.⁹ Promotion is also associated with youth smoking initiation.¹⁵ Generally, advertising and promotion occur through direct advertising, sponsorships, giveaways, discounts, displays at point of sale and promotion of tobacco brands through non-tobacco items or through venues. Research shows that to be effective, bans must be comprehensive; limited bans have no effect.

A Health Canada report also concludes that tobacco sponsorship **is** tobacco advertising. In fact, tobacco sponsorship is more effective than traditional tobacco advertising, in part because of the legitimacy cigarettes gain from being associated with celebrity role models and prestigious events.¹⁶

Displays of cigarette packages and tobacco in retail stores are also an important form of advertising particularly since other forms of advertising have been banned. In fact, the tobacco industry pays \$77 million dollars a year in Canada to have these retail displays.

In 2002, Saskatchewan's *Tobacco Control Act* banned tobacco product displays, one of the tobacco industry's last avenues of promotion to young people. Saskatchewan's legislation is precedent-setting and very important in protecting youth and all residents. The *Canadian Cancer Society* says "*This ban is a very positive step. It's precedent setting. It's going to save lives.*"¹⁷ and the *Non-Smokers' Rights Association* says that Saskatchewan's legislation is "...a model for protecting children from one of Big Tobacco's last avenues of promotion."¹⁸ The legislation was highlighted at the *12th World Conference on Tobacco or Health* in Finland in 2003 and, because of the many requests for information, the *Canadian Cancer Society* developed a website to provide information about the ban to other provinces and countries. (www.bandisplays.ca)

The tobacco industry's legal challenge of this legislation in 2002 was dismissed; however, the appeal was won. The Saskatchewan government has appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. Saskatchewan health groups are convinced the law will be upheld.

Similar legislation has been passed in Manitoba and Nunavut, also in Iceland and Ireland. Several other provinces and countries are considering passing it.

4. Counter-advertising

Counter-advertising seeks to counter the tobacco industry's promotion of itself as a good corporate citizen and expose it as "a powerful, deceptive, and dangerous enemy of the public's health." The industry's many unconscionable business practices have been revealed in industry documents made public through litigation. Counter-advertising shifts the blame onto the tobacco industry where it belongs.¹⁹

For example, California's *Tobacco Control Program* directly attacked the predatory and deadly practices of the industry through mass media counter-advertising including a variety of advertisements and other initiatives. As the California Department of Health states:

"For profit, the industry invests millions of dollars in public relations and product advertising and promotions to maintain the social acceptability of its products and their use. For profit, it makes generous campaign contributions, lobbies lawmakers to prevent meaningful regulation of tobacco, sponsors community events and cultural and entertainment activities, and donates to philanthropic causes. For profit, it aggressively markets its products to youth, secures child-view-level placements of its products in retail stores close to schools, distributes Trojan horse tobacco educational materials to schools and parents, and pays for the main characters in movies to smoke."

and also:

“The tobacco industry is not just fighting for the legal right to go on selling addiction and lethal consumer products without additional regulation or taxation. It is also fighting to maintain the public’s indifference to the fact that this is what it’s doing.”¹⁹

Canada has been a world leader with its world precedent-setting counter-advertising on cigarette packages. Tobacco product packaging now displays graphic pictures and messages on tobacco-related diseases. Tips on quitting smoking are printed on the inside slider or leaflet. A University of Waterloo study concludes this measure has resulted in making smokers more likely to quit.²⁰

Ongoing Monitoring of Best Practices

There needs to be continual monitoring and assessing of the development of ‘Best Practices’ in tobacco control worldwide.

The tobacco industry fights ‘Best Practices’

‘Best Practices’ such as smoking bans reduce the tobacco industry’s profits since people tend to reduce their smoking or quit altogether when ‘Best Practices’ are introduced.

Although the industry has portrayed itself as concerned about children smoking, internal tobacco industry documents reveal the industry’s real intentions. They reveal the industry:

- recruits new customers through promotion and advertising.
- works to eliminate or weaken tobacco control measures that protect children from addiction.
- promotes and tries to achieve ‘buy-in’ from the public and policy makers for useless and weak programs. Initiatives designed to build the industry’s image as a good corporate citizen interested in protecting children from tobacco are also prevalent.

Saskatchewan has experienced strong opposition from the tobacco industry when ‘Best Practices’ such as smoking bans and the tobacco display ban were promoted.

Ineffective Strategies

The tobacco industry is also known for promoting strategies that are ineffective. Some of these include:

- Youth possession laws.
- Ventilation solutions to second-hand smoke including smoking rooms.
- Partial restrictions such as shared smoking and non-smoking sections or smoking rooms in an otherwise smoke-free building.
- Education programs developed by the industry.
- Education programs in the absence of ‘Best Practice’ policies mentioned above.

Front Groups

The tobacco industry tends not to fight 'Best Practices' themselves but works through front groups who carry the tobacco industry's agenda. The World Health Organization says:

*"Governments need to be aware that the tobacco industry routinely funds "front groups" with more credibility than themselves to make their arguments. These arguments should not necessarily be dismissed out of hand, but experience shows that many, if not most, industry arguments, rest on false assumptions or misrepresent experiences in other countries. The duplicity commonly found in many of these arguments is described in great detail in internal tobacco industry documents."*⁹

Tobacco Industry Activities in Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, the tobacco industry is highly active in protecting what they perceive as their interests since millions of dollars stand to be lost through smoking bans in public and workplaces.

Here are just some examples of the tobacco industry's activities in Saskatchewan:

- A former cabinet minister was hired to lobby Members of the Legislative Assembly to weaken the provincial *Tobacco Control Act* prior to its passage.
- The industry has hired an advertising agency to assist those who fight tobacco control initiatives and a law firm to challenge the province's *Tobacco Control Act*.
- The industry promotes tobacco products in University bars and other bars frequented by young people. It offered the *University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU)* \$225,000 to promote tobacco products at co-sponsored concerts. The USSU turned them down and received a national award for this courageous move.
- The industry promoted 'Wise Decisions', the industry's educational program for school students, to Saskatchewan teachers. Not surprisingly, the program did not talk about the harmful effects of tobacco and portrayed smoking as an adult activity, a technique which has been shown to encourage youth smoking. The program was promoted to some teachers by offering free trips.
- The industry is currently marketing its products to young people in Saskatchewan bars. Concert environments are exciting venues to promote tobacco using the cigarette brand's color and featuring provocatively-dressed models offering tobacco products.
- The western representative of the *Canadian Tobacco Manufacturing Council*, the industry's most powerful and successful lobbying body, has visited Saskatchewan talk shows and the media to promote its agenda to the public.
- In 2004, the tobacco industry funded a *Hotels Association of Saskatchewan* survey to fight a proposed province-wide smoking ban for public places and promote the industry's own agenda of ventilation.

Saskatchewan is making tremendous progress!

In the past few years Saskatchewan has made tremendous progress in protecting children, youth and all residents from tobacco use and second-hand smoke.

The implementation of some 'Best Practices' in Saskatchewan include an increase in smoke-free public places, an increase in the provincial tobacco tax and a precedent-setting ban of tobacco product displays. These measures have resulted in a marked decrease in the percentage of smokers in the province, from 25.4% in 2001 to 21% in 2002⁸.

Lowest-ever cigarette consumption in Saskatchewan!

Tobacco consumption in Saskatchewan has also dropped to 967 million cigarettes, the lowest level ever recorded.

Figure 1. Tobacco Consumption in Saskatchewan in Billions of Cigarettes Purchased, 1982/83 – 2002/03

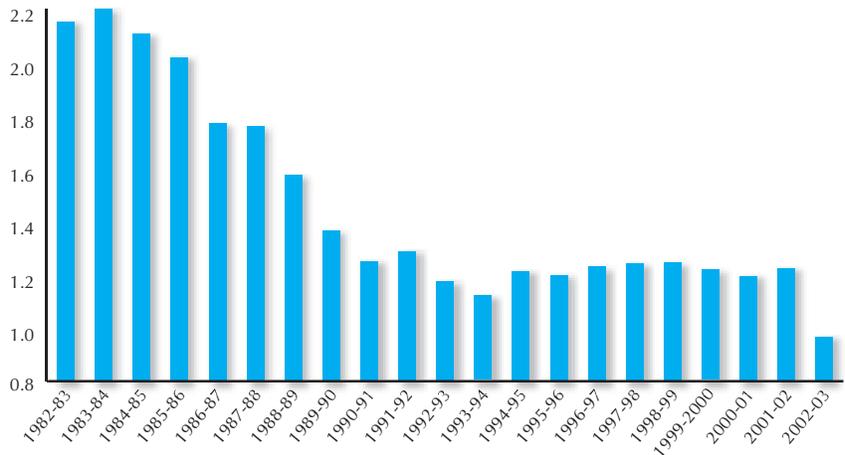


Table 1. Saskatchewan's Progress towards 'Best Practices', 1998, 2004, & Goals for Achievement by 2005

BEST PRACTICE	1998	2004	2005
Increased Tobacco Taxation	Provincial tobacco tax was \$16.80/carton. Provincial consumption was 1.2 billion cigarettes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3/2002 – The provincial tax increased to \$32/carton which was partly responsible for a 21% decrease in consumption to the lowest level on record. • 3/2004 Provincial tobacco tax increased by \$3. 	Tobacco tax increases will continue to cause a decrease in consumption.
Smoke-free Public Places	The majority of public places in the province are not required to be smoke-free.	All public places are smoke-free except restaurants, bars, billiard halls, bowling and bingo establishments and casinos.	All public places will be 100% smoke-free.
Smoke-free Workplaces	Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 1996 restrict but do not ban workplace smoking.	Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 1996 restrict but do not ban workplace smoking.	All workplaces will be 100% smoke-free, no ventilated smoking rooms & no exemptions.
Banning Advertising & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco product displays are in most convenience stores. • Federally, the Tobacco Act prohibits promotion of tobacco except in magazines with adult readership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco product displays had been banned from facilities to which children have access. RBH Inc legal challenge unsuccessful; appeal is successful. Province appeals to the Supreme Court of Canada. • Federally – Oct/03 - All tobacco sponsorship banned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco product display ban continues. • All advertising and sponsorship banned.
Counter-advertising	No mass media counter-advertising except some American ads.	Some counter-advertising nationally, eg. Heather Crowe campaign. Provincially, "Smoking Sucks" campaign begins in 2004. Increase in American ads.	More mass media counter-advertising done nationally and provincially.

An Invitation to Support a 'Best Practices' Vision for Saskatchewan

The *Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction* invites all Health Regions and organizations to support a vision for Saskatchewan which will reduce tobacco-related deaths, smoking rates, consumption, and youth addiction by:

- promoting and facilitating implementation of 'Best Practices' in tobacco control;
- discouraging ineffective and harmful tobacco reduction strategies; and
- countering misinformation campaigns and other counterproductive activities of the tobacco industry and those who carry its agenda.

The following priorities are recommended and we request your support for achieving them in Saskatchewan by 2005:

- 1. 100% smoke-free public places by promoting municipal bylaws and advocating for provincial legislation.**
- 2. 100% smoke-free workplaces with no exemptions and no smoking rooms through provincial workplace legislation.**
- 3. Supporting Saskatchewan's precedent-setting legislation banning tobacco product displays.**

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Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction
M53 – 2110 Hamilton Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2E3
(306) 766-7903

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