

Editorials



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A Good News Story

Ronald McDonald doesn't smoke. And now neither does anyone else in the company-owned outlets. In May of 1993 a group of United States attorneys general formed a working group to study tobacco-related issues, focussing on passive smoking and children.

Every day, millions of children spend time in fast food restaurants, eating and working. Because smoking is permitted in almost all of these establishments, these youths are exposed to environmental tobacco smoke, a class A carcinogen.

Concerned by the dangers posed by this exposure to passive smoke, the working group met with the leaders of the fast food industry to discuss the issue of environmental tobacco smoke in their restaurants. Now McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd has taken the lead. There is no more smoking in the company-owned restaurants, with strong encouragement for the franchisees to follow suit.

McDonald's is the first major chain of fast food outlets to take this bold step. This is one more corporate Canadian success story in the smoking prevention field — another Air Canada experience, so to speak.

Ronald McDonald, we salute you, together with the thousands of parents who will welcome your progressive attitude. ☺

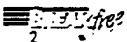
Update:

Taco Bell, following in the footsteps of McDonald's in the U.S. and Canada, announced in March that it would ban smoking at all of its 3,300 company owned restaurants in the U.S. The Company cited concerns about the effects of second-hand smoke for the move. Taco Bell, which is owned by PepsiCo, expects that 1,000 franchise stores will join in the ban.

"Our move to this new policy is driven by our concern for Taco Bell's customers' and employees' health regarding the dangers of second-hand smoke," said Taco Bell President John Martin.

None of the nearly 60 Taco Bell restaurants in Canada are affected by the ban. ☺

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Health Community Powerful Force!

In the first six weeks of 1994, the health community came together to fight the proposed tobacco tax rollbacks as it had never come together before on a tobacco control issue. Thank you to all of you who participated in this massive national campaign.

Some say that, despite these incredible grassroots efforts, "lost" the fight against a tax rollback. In the purest sense of the word, I would have to agree. However, I would argue that we were also very successful on many counts.

In my role at the Council in mobilizing the community, I sent out Calls to Action to our Provincial Councils, our National Members and various other health groups. Every Call received an overwhelming response, resulting in thousands of calls and letters to MPs and provincial representatives across Canada.

This proved to me that where the health community really won is on the strengthening and expansion of the tobacco control movement. More than ever now, we are a force to be reckoned with. Both the tobacco industry and the government were surprised and unable to deal with the skill and force of our campaign.

The most tangible result of the unification of the health community was the support given to the full-page advocacy ad that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on February 1, 1994. Even though the ad was very hard-hitting - thanks to the craftsmanship of Gar Mahood of the Non-Smokers' Rights Association - within just two hours, we were able to confirm 34 organizations to sign on! The combination of ad's message and the overwhelming support for it in the health community turned the ad into a leading news story that day, with many follow-up stories after.

The impact was clear. The public outcry of the health community put the health issues on the agenda and forced Prime Minister Chrétien to listen. The result was the federal anti-smuggling package and, in particular, the Tobacco Demand Reduction Strategy, designed to mitigate the damage of the federal tax rollbacks. The TDRS will finally put some serious money (\$185 m over the next three years) into tobacco control efforts across Canada.

Now that we have to work even harder to counter the effects of tobacco tax rollbacks, you will be seeing more Calls to Action from me in the coming months, the first of which will be on plain packaging. So, thank you in advance for your ongoing commitment. Without it, Canadians will continue to die in epidemic proportions at the hands of the tobacco industry. ☺

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