

Council News

Report of the Legislative Committee



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Tobacco Demand Reduction Strategy

The decision by the federal government to roll back tobacco taxes was a disaster - the largest setback in the history of public health in Canada. There is a small silver lining to this very black cloud, however

Because the tobacco control coalition mounted what was probably its biggest campaign ever in order to prevent rollbacks it dramatically

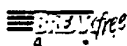
raised public awareness of the health consequences of a rollback. The federal government was therefore forced to do something to mitigate the damage. This "something" is, in part, a three-year \$185,000,000 "Tobacco Demand Reduction Strategy."

The health community must ensure that both the Strategy's broad-based initiatives — mass media campaigns, school programs, enforcement of laws, tobacco policy research and legislative initiatives, as well as specific programs aimed at groups — youth, high risk women, hard to reach people and so on, produce results. We are encouraged that both the Minister of Health and the Solicitor General have publicly spoken about new tobacco control legislation similar to the *Hazardous Products Act*.

Here are some principles which the federal government should consider in fleshing out the new Strategy.

- the lion's share of the funding should be spent at arm's length from the federal government with an independent "blue ribbon" panel overseeing and evaluating progress on behalf of Canadians.
- there must be functional integration among major components of the Strategy. For example, national media campaigns must be coordinated with advocacy efforts to get promised new legislation.
- at the start, funds should go into a solid policy oriented baseline survey and from there, public policy concentration on prevention and protection must be implemented across the country at various levels of government.
- a system of competitive grants for local groups will bring many dividends

We have a chance to make major gains for health in the coming three years. We must use imagination and not simply dust the cobwebs off old health promotion projects just because there is now some money available. The key criteria must be: by how much will this program reduce future tobacco-caused death and disease?



Smoking Cessation

The first ever International Congress on Smoking Cessation was held in Glasgow, Scotland from March 5-8, 1994. Elinor Wilson, Chair of the Advisory Board of the *Guide Your Patients to a Smoke Free Future* program, attended the Congress to present an abstract on the approach used to get physicians to initiate and support smoking cessation efforts with their patients.

She noted that this approach involves identifying the needs of doctors, supplying information to them, offering programs or services that meet real needs and assessing how well these needs are met.

By the interest shown it was apparent that the *Smoke Free Future* program was viewed as a model for many other nations looking at implementing similar programs.

Report on Sponsorships

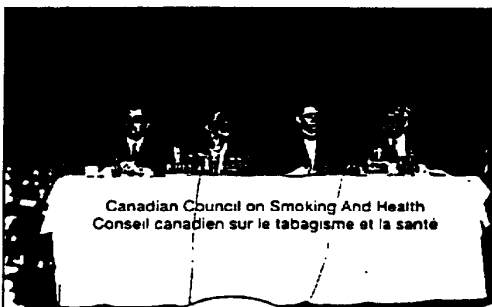
The CCSH launched National Non-Smoking Weeks (NNSW) 1994, with the release of a special study on the impact of tobacco industry sponsorships in the Ottawa/Hull region. The study was commissioned by the Council to support the theme of NNSW 1994 which was "Tobacco Industry Sponsorships: not so subliminal advertising."

The study was made public at a news conference held on January 13 in Ottawa and indicated that residents of the Ottawa/Hull area are exposed to tobacco company sponsorship advertisements a minimum of 295 million times per year.

The report focused on two Imperial Limited Sponsorship campaigns, Player's Ltd. and Matinée Ltd., targeted at males and females respectively. A survey of more brand "shell" companies most likely would have revealed an even higher level of tobacco sponsorship advertising and exposure.

Although the report relied on data from Ottawa and Hull, because the vast majority of tobacco sponsorship campaigns are national in scope, the report reflects the magnitude of tobacco sponsorship advertising in other major centres across the country.

A limited number of copies of the report are available. Please contact the National Clearinghouse on Tobacco or Health at 1-800-267-5234 or 567-3050 to obtain a copy.



From left to right: Randy Woods, researcher; Anne-Marie Cormier, Executive Assistant/Agente d'information, CCSH; Janice Forsythe, Executive Director, CCSH; and David Hill, President, CCSH, at the news conference held to launch NNSW 1994.

Smoking or Health Update • Spring 1994

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