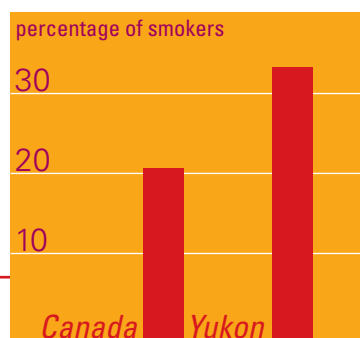


# yukon tobacco reduction strategy



*The Yukon has the third highest smoking rate in Canada, second only to Nunavut and Northwest Territories. While approximately 21 per cent of Canadians 12 years of age or older are daily smokers, in Yukon, 33.4 per cent of those in the same age category light up every day.*

- our goals** > *increase the number of youth who say “no” to tobacco*
- > *increase the number of former smokers*

The use of tobacco puts a terrible health, economic and social burden on all Yukoners. Tobacco is the most visible cause of preventable illness, disability and premature death in Canada. The picture looks the same in the Yukon.

The Yukon government wants people to quit smoking and it wants to help them do it.

The government has introduced its own tobacco strategy, which works in conjunction with the national strategy. *New Directions for Tobacco Control in Canada – A National Strategy* provides a blueprint for tobacco reduction.

More and more individuals, health professionals, employers, groups like the Canadian Cancer Society and governments at all levels are joining forces to reduce tobacco consumption on many different fronts. These efforts have paid off. Every year, there are fewer Canadians who smoke. We'd like to see the same effort and same result in the Yukon.

That's why the Yukon government is joining the battle against tobacco and the tobacco industry with its *Tobacco Reduction Strategy*.

The strategy is two pronged – the first goal is to support children and adolescents to resist tobacco messaging so that they will never start smoking; the second goal is to help smokers quit and stay smoke-free.

The strategy's success depends largely on partnerships between government departments, public organizations and interest groups. It involves promoting smoking prevention and cessation through a mass media public awareness campaign and working with youth of all ages in ways which are meaningful to them; it requires investment in training our health professionals to enable them to provide smoking cessation information and resources.

## ***working with youth***

Preventing youth from starting to smoke is a cornerstone of any tobacco control strategy. We will be most effective by working with youth to help them make healthy decisions about smoking.

An important aspect of the Yukon's prevention strategy is educating young people about the health effects of the tobacco industry's products, and the marketing tactics used by the industry to recruit new smokers. The goal is to "denormalize" smoking in the minds of young people.

A number of initiatives have been specifically aimed at reducing the number of youth who smoke:

*We do not, under any circumstances, want kids to smoke.*

*tobacco company advertising campaign, 1994*

*...if our company is to survive and prosper over the long term, we must get our share of the youth market.*

*memo from the same tobacco company, 1973*

*We don't smoke the stuff. We just sell it. We reserve the right to smoke for the young, the poor... and the stupid.*

*RJ Reynolds tobacco executive*

*Be smart — don't start.*

*SWAT  
Students Working  
Against Tobacco  
Watson Lake*

### ***1 Hearing youth voices and looking for champions***

We are promoting smoke-free lifestyles at the community level by partnering with existing student groups such as SWAT (Students Working Against Tobacco) and other established youth organizations.

We are encouraging and supporting youth groups in their smoke-free activities and we are looking for ideas and guidance from Yukoners who could become champions in working with, and for, youth to decrease the number of young people who smoke. An example of this is *Project: Moving Target* where high school students will learn about smoking and the tobacco industry, and then share what they learn with local elementary students.

### ***2 Resources for school communities***

We are increasing the profile of smoking prevention and cessation efforts in Yukon schools by making tools and resources available to teachers.

### ***3 Making the link between active living and smoking prevention***

We are partnering with the *Active Yukon Schools* program, administered by the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon, to emphasize the benefits of physical activity in maintaining smoke-free lifestyles.

### ***4 Web resources***

In partnership with the Department of Education, we will maintain a link on the Yukon Education Students Network (YESNET) that will connect students with information about smoking and resources for quitting designed specifically for youth.

## changing smoking behaviour – a smoker’s challenge

Forty percent of Yukoners are former smokers. Most followed a path which had many ups and downs, and a few important stages along the way. Most tried to quit more than once and all made a commitment to keep on trying to quit until they succeeded.

Quitting smoking is a process that takes time and energy. It’s not like making a wish and blowing out the candles on your birthday cake. Everyone who makes a significant change in their lifestyle — whether it’s spending more time with family, becoming more active, eating healthier, or quitting smoking — embarks on a process of change. The process involves making a commitment to acquiring new information, practicing new skills, testing out strategies, changing old habits and developing new ones. Relapses are common; but with each relapse, the smoker learns something new about the process of change, and with each attempt to quit, the chances of success improve.

*About 40% of smokers quit successfully on their first try. The rest will make several quit attempts before becoming smoke-free for good. Both categories of quitters will be on the road to improved health as soon as they finish their last cigarette.*

*54% of smokers intend to quit within 6 months.*

*Canadian Tobacco Use Survey, 2001*

A good way to understand the change process is to look at how smokers might think about smoking at different stages:

### **thinking about thinking about quitting**

*I’m not sure I want to quit. I don’t even know why I should. But even if I wanted to quit, I’m not sure I could...*

### **thinking about quitting**

*I’m thinking about quitting, there are lots of good reasons to quit but not right now. Maybe in six months...*

### **getting ready**

*What do I need to do? I need a plan. Maybe I’ll try to postpone that first cigarette of the day. Or, maybe I’ll stop smoking in the house. I could do that...*

### **quitting**

*I’ve picked my quit date. I’ve got my plan, my friends and family are rooting for me, and I know how to get back on track if I fall off...*

### **being a non-smoker**

*My last cigarette was 3 months ago... I feel healthier, I’m walking more, and my clothes don’t smell. I still get the occasional urge, but I sure feel good. Maybe I’ll treat myself to something special with all the money I am saving.*

## the right quitting tools

Smokers need different information and tools to be able to move from one stage to another. At any given time, about half of all smokers say they would like to quit within the next six months.

A smoker who is thinking about quitting may find that receiving information about the risks of smoking and the benefits of quitting will tip the balance in favour of quitting, help build commitment, and allow for progress to the next stage. A smoker at this stage would not benefit from information about how to quit.

On the other hand, smokers who are getting ready to quit may want some practical ideas about how to manage urges, what to do with their hands, or what to substitute for that after-dinner cigarette.

Matching the information and tools to the stage a smoker is at helps move that smoker along the path, closer to the goal of quitting.

*People who smoke deserve our support. To encourage quitting, we need to have intensive, long term mass media campaigns aimed specifically at smokers.*

*Paul McDonald, Ph.D*

*Smokers indicate that a health care provider's advice to quit provides important motivation for making a quit attempt. Even brief advice from a doctor can improve clients' quit rates by 30% and more in-depth advice can double quit rates.*

*Clinical Practice Guidelines, 2000*

### **getting the message out**

Research tells us that mass media is the most effective way to reach the largest number of smokers and non-smokers with health risk and other useful information.

In partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society and Health Canada, Yukon has embarked on a major mass media campaign to help Yukon smokers move towards the goal of being smoke-free using the stages of change model.

By treating smokers with respect and speaking from the smoker's perspective, we believe our messages will help move some smokers to think about quitting and move others who are thinking about quitting, to give it a try.

The three-year campaign, featuring Yukoners who are committed to quitting, also seeks to establish non-smoking as the norm for all ages.

For more information on the Yukon Tobacco Reduction Strategy visit our website:

**[www.smokersline.ca](http://www.smokersline.ca)**

or call 667-8393 or 1-800-661-0408, local 8393 in the Yukon

### **quitting resources**

Health professionals, including physicians, community health nurses, dentists, counsellors and addictions workers can play a powerful role in supporting and assisting smokers on their quit journey. To do so, health professionals need current, practical information on how to be effective by making the best intervention at the most appropriate time. We will be offering training and educational opportunities to health professionals of many disciplines.

We are also maintaining a website and information line to enable smokers to obtain the most current information on quitting strategies.

### **monitoring progress**

Each part of our strategy is geared to reducing the number of Yukoners who smoke. We want to prevent young Yukoners from starting to smoke, and we want to encourage and assist those who smoke to move closer to the goal of quitting. How will we know if our efforts are successful? Each component will need to be evaluated. We need to ask, and answer questions such as:

**Are cigarette sales down?**

**Are fewer Yukoners taking up smoking?**

**Is the number of non-smokers going up?**

**Are Yukoners more knowledgeable about the process of change?**

Our evaluation framework will begin by making the best use of existing data bases (e.g., tobacco sales) and regular surveys conducted by Statistics Canada. We will then build in additional measures and tools so that we can monitor our progress as we go.