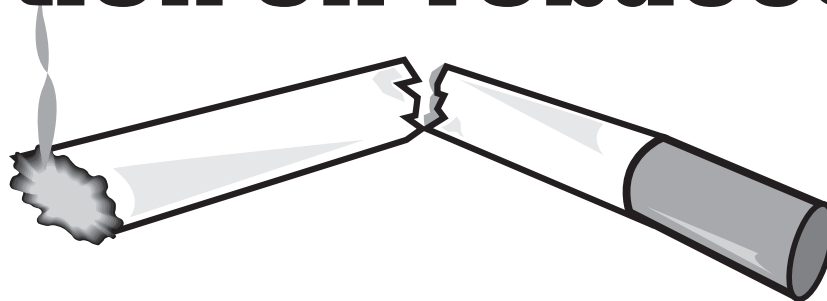


# Action on Tobacco





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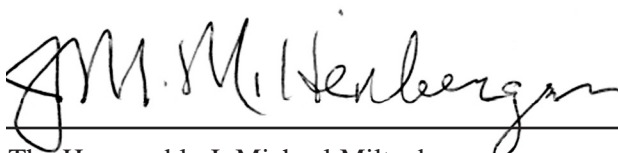
## Message From the Minister

A basic principle of the health and social services system is that people have a responsibility to maintain their own health. The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to providing the tools and support that people may need to take greater control of factors that impact on their own health, break their dependencies and to protect our younger generation from health defeating habits, such as smoking.

The statistics of youth smoking are staggering and the time is now to start implementing a strategy on this important issue. The GNWT is committed to work together, with the Department of Health and Social Services as its lead, in the fight against this lethal problem. We know we have some tough work ahead of us to make it happen, but we are prepared for this.

The *NWT Action on Tobacco Strategy* recognises that there is a role in this for everyone. Elders and parents play a huge part in setting a good example. Teachers and health care providers can reinforce messaging on the dangers of tobacco. And everyone, as a friend, a parent, a co-worker or a relative of a smoker, can make a huge difference by supporting them in the daily effort to quit.

As Minister of Health and Social Services, I am pleased to introduce this Action Plan, "*The Territorial Strategy for Tobacco Control*". Working together, we can reap success and achieve improved health status as a result.



The Honourable J. Michael Miltenberger  
Minister of Health and Social Services





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## Introduction

Tobacco use, in particular cigarette smoking, has become an *acute* public health concern in the Northwest Territories. In 1998-1999, the GNWT participated with other provinces and territories to develop a National Strategy to prevent or reduce tobacco consumption across Canada. To ensure that efforts made within the NWT were appropriate to the needs of Northern residents, the GNWT established an Interdepartmental Tobacco Working Group in 1999 tasked with developing a strategy on tobacco control and reduction. Representatives from the Department of Health & Social Services, Finance, Municipal & Community Affairs, Education, Culture & Employment and the Worker's Compensation Board participated in the development of "New Directions for Tobacco Control in the Northwest Territories: A Territorial Strategy" which proposes a multi-disciplinary, cross departmental approach to prevent, reduce and control the use of tobacco in the NWT.

Upon completion of the draft strategy, an internal consultation was undertaken within the GNWT departments. Throughout summer and fall of 2000, a more extensive consultation occurred with partners and other stakeholders such as health and social service boards, education boards, professional associations, Aboriginal groups and non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

The Department of Health & Social Services has also prepared a special report called "Smoke Alarm: A Summary Report on Smoking in the Northwest Territories" which provides some sobering information on the prevalence and impacts of tobacco use in the NWT. This report was officially released on May 31 2001, *World No Tobacco Day*.

*Action on Tobacco* identifies the goals, actions and measures that will, if implemented successfully, prevent or reduce the use of tobacco in the NWT. This plan outlines the major steps which will need to be taken to improve the health status of NWT residents.

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## Action on Tobacco

*Action on Tobacco* provides direction for a multi-departmental, multi-disciplinary, multi-organizational approach that is necessary to achieve a significant reduction in tobacco use. ***No one department or organization can, on its own, undertake all of these activities.*** To effectively prevent, reduce and control tobacco use in the NWT, a joint effort and action is required by all members of our society in combating this public health problem. For example, the federal government plays a critical role and the GNWT must continue to support and encourage the federal government in its work to reduce the financial impact of tobacco on the health of Canadians.

A vision for a smoke-free NWT recognizes the legitimate traditional role of tobacco in Aboriginal cultural and/or spiritual ceremonies. The aim of the NWT Strategy and *Action on Tobacco* is to address the secular use and abuse of tobacco that directly and adversely impact on the health of its users and people around them, especially young children.

### ***Long term goals of our efforts are:***

- **Prevention** - ensure that those who do not smoke, never start
- **Protection** - protect people, especially children, from Environmental Tobacco Smoke
- **Cessation** - help and support people who want to stop smoking
- **Denormalization** - change attitudes towards smoking so it is regarded as unhealthy and undesirable behaviour.

The GNWT will restructure and expand the Interdepartmental Working Group on Tobacco to include representatives from NGOs to oversee the implementation of *Action on Tobacco* and report their recommendations to the Chief Medical Health Officer. Youth will also have representation on the Working Group to promote and support the development of adolescent-specific tobacco prevention, reduction or cessation programs and offer advice about matters concerning youth and tobacco use.

The *Action Plan* must be approached using tools such as policy and legislation, health education and promotion, research and capacity building. Implementation must comprehensively use these tools to be successful. For example, health education and promotion must accompany legislation (and vice versa). Research will provide valuable information to develop effective health education and promotion measures and will also support capacity building at the community level. Capacity building will, in turn, support the implementation of new programs and services.

The reduction and eventually the elimination of tobacco use will be accomplished when we succeed in raising a new generation that is free from addiction to tobacco. This can be achieved through a variety of anti-tobacco use programs/projects and policies. It may take several decades to achieve the vision of a smoke-free society in the NWT, however, working together can lead to significant progress towards that objective.

**Aboriginal youth aged 10-17 are 3 times more likely than non-aboriginal youth to be current smokers.**

*(Facts on Smoking in the NWT; National Population Health Survey)*

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## GOAL: PREVENTION

Each of the actions is described by priority and/or sequence.

- ACTIONS:**
1. Development of school prevention programs will be targeted to middle childhood (6-12) years.
    - A. The GNWT will create resources to address tobacco use and addiction in the NWT School Health Curriculum by creating a separate tobacco unit in the School Health Curriculum by January 2004.
    - B. The GNWT will make available yearly in-service to teachers by January 2004 to support the delivery of the tobacco unit as part of the NWT Health Program.
  2. The GNWT will deliver pro-health messages to counter pro-tobacco messages. This will be done through placing paid ads or public service announcements, and promoting community activities to prevent tobacco use. It will work with the media to reframe messages so that they support denormalization and tobacco use prevention. Effectiveness of the messages to the appropriate age groups will be monitored annually.
  3. The GNWT, in cooperation with regional and community partners, will reduce youth susceptibility to tobacco use by implementing youth empowerment activities, by offering positive alternatives to youth, de-glamorizing tobacco use, and involving parents and families. These events and activities will be developed and implemented to reach and involve youth in a variety of settings, including school-based prevention programs, youth groups, teen wellness centers, community centers, youth at risk programs, cultural centers, group homes and detention centers.
  4. The GNWT will use community development practices to build and support capacity at the community level to help people and organizations take action to prevent or reduce tobacco use.
    - A. The GNWT will dedicate a percentage of the Health Promotion Fund to be used for community tobacco initiatives.
    - B. The GNWT will seek to build the capacity of communities and assist residents to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for action on tobacco control. This will be done through providing training, resources, and technical expertise in social marketing, communications, partnerships, advocacy, research and evaluation.

**34% of all youth  
10-17 years are  
current smokers.  
This compares with  
approximately 17%  
of Canadian youth.**  
*(1999 School Use Tobacco  
Survey; 1996 NPHS)*

**It is illegal to sell cigarettes to youth under 18 years of age, yet only 33% of youth aged 15-17 were asked their age when they attempted to buy tobacco.**

*(1999 School Use Tobacco Survey; 1996 NPHS)*

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- C. The GNWT will hold tobacco conferences and/or workshops to promote knowledge development, networking and best practices. The aim is to create and strengthen understanding of tobacco control issues as well as build opportunities for collaborative efforts.
5. Preventing children's and youth's access to tobacco products is a key aspect in ensuring they never start smoking. The GNWT will work closely with Health Canada to ensure regular monitoring and enforcement of existing federal laws that ban the sale and distribution of tobacco products to minors. Territorial Environmental Health Officers travel to communities on a regular basis and will assist in educating retail outlets about their responsibilities under this Act.
- A. The GNWT will monitor the results of compliance checks undertaken by federal tobacco enforcement officers and produce an annual summary of the results of these enforcement activities.
  - B. GNWT Environmental Health Officers will be trained to educate retail outlets about their responsibilities under the federal Tobacco Act including signage, product display and verification of age of purchaser, and will alert the federal enforcement officer if follow up is required.
6. Regulating how and by whom tobacco products are sold is closely related to enforcement and preventing the sale of tobacco to minors. The GNWT will investigate ways to control sales of tobacco products.
- A. The GNWT will prepare an options paper for public and cabinet discussion to review options for controlling the sale of tobacco products at the community level by January 2004.
  - B. The GNWT will support efforts at the national level to increase the regulation of tobacco products and to limit advertising and promotion of these products. For example, this may include product display regulations, time and place of sale.

## **RESULTS:**

Reduced sale of tobacco products to minors by 80% by 2007.

Tobacco use among minors (under 18) will be reduced by 50% by 2011.

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## GOAL: PROTECTION

Each of the actions is described by priority and/or sequence.

- ACTIONS: 1. Community action is key to protecting prenatal women, infants, children and other non-smokers from Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS). This is an important step in protecting their health as well as in denormalizing the use of tobacco.
- A. GNWT will encourage and support communities to develop and pass by-laws to restrict smoking in public places.
  - B. The GNWT will assist and support territorial and local groups to take action to reduce exposure to ETS, especially in places not regulated by bylaws.
2. The GNWT will explore and identify possible options for NWT tobacco legislation and produce a discussion paper by January 2003.
3. In the NWT, the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) administers occupational health and safety legislation. This legislation does not specifically address ETS as a safety hazard. However, since ETS is similar to other hazardous airborne pollutants (such as asbestos), and regulations exist for regulating the use of asbestos in the workplace, authority exists under the Safety Act to enact regulations pertaining to ETS. The WCB will be encouraged to take actions to restrict smoking in the workplace.

## RESULT:

Protection from ETS in the workplace and further denormalize tobacco use.

An increase of 15% in communities passing by-laws to restrict smoking in public places.

**48% of children  
under 15 live in a  
home where  
smoking occurs  
regularly.**

*(Smoke Alarm Report)*

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## **GOAL: CESSATION**

Each of the actions is described by priority and/or sequence.

- ACTIONS: 1. Cessation programs become a priority in larger centres while prevention and denormalization programs (for example: a smoke free homes' campaign) should be promoted more heavily in smaller communities.
- A. The GNWT will supply training to health care and social services providers regarding cessation counseling and appropriate cessation program referrals. This training will be incorporated into the Northern Nursing program and Community Health Representative (CHR) program by January 2004. In addition, Train the Trainer sessions on cessation will be provided in each region by January 2003.
  - B. The GNWT will make counseling for cessation available, including support groups when appropriate. It will also collaborate with cessation program providers to deliver these services. Programs should be tailored to the needs of participants (eg: pregnant women and their partners) by January 2005.
2. The GNWT will add the treatment of Nicotine Addiction using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and other smoking cessation aids, as an Extended Health Benefit Program by April 1, 2004.
3. The GNWT will promote smoking cessation efforts for those under the age of 18 by disseminating appropriate youth cessation materials.

## **RESULT:**

Smokers who want to quit will increase by 20%.

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**76% of current adult smokers have attempted to quit at least once. The majority have tried 2-4 times.**

*(Smoke Alarm Report)*

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## EVALUATION

Evaluation and research will provide valuable information to determine if efforts to prevent, protect, promote cessation and denormalize tobacco use were successful. Major initiatives will be thoroughly evaluated. In addition, the information can be used to assist in the development of effective health promotion, education and cessation programs.

- A. The GNWT will repeat its survey of school-age populations about knowledge, attitude and behavior about smoking every three years.
- B. The GNWT will evaluate educator feedback with a view to improving the effectiveness of the tobacco materials.
- C. The GNWT will continue to monitor emerging issues, such as changing tobacco industry marketing practices, availability and use of nicotine replacement products, etc.
- D. The GNWT will continue to monitor the incidence and prevalence of smoking behaviour, smoking related diseases and its impact on the health care system.
- E. The GNWT will modify death certificates by January 2003 to identify when tobacco use is identified as a contributor to mortality.

## CONCLUSION

*Action on Tobacco* identifies actions, results and goals intended to prevent, reduce and control tobacco use in the NWT. A smoke-free NWT may be difficult to achieve but it is not impossible. Comprehensive implementation of the strategic directions and consistent commitment to prevent and reduce tobacco use, will eventually lead to a decrease in smoking-related illnesses and deaths.

Everyone in the NWT knows someone who has died or suffered from a smoking-related disease such as lung cancer or emphysema. It is time that action be taken to help prevent needless suffering and death associated with tobacco use.

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