

Speaking Notes  
For Hon. Jamie Muir  
Minister of Health  
Bill Briefing for  
An Act to Protect Young Persons  
and Other Persons from Tobacco Smoke

Red Room, Province House  
Friday, April 26, 2002

Check against delivery

- Good morning everyone.
- Thank you for coming out so early this morning.
- This is an historic day for Nova Scotia – a day when we as a province take another significant step forward in the fight against tobacco.
- Last October – the Premier and I announced another first – Nova Scotia’s comprehensive tobacco strategy.
- That strategy was developed with the input of many of you who are here.
- Before I continue, I would like to acknowledge all the health stakeholders here who helped set the stage for today’s announcement.
- There are too many to name, but please know that each and every one of you has my sincere thanks and appreciation.
- Today, we are adding another important component to our tobacco strategy.
- We are following through on a promise to introduce legislation that will help all Nova Scotians breathe easier.
- There are only two other places in the country with extensive province-wide smoking legislation – and I am proud to say the legislation I am bringing forward today is among the very strongest in Canada.
- People in Nova Scotia have been waiting for this legislation, and they are ready for it.
- Smoking is one of our most significant public health problems. It is the leading cause of preventable deaths in Canada.
- Let me put that in a local context.
- An estimated 1650 Nova Scotians die each year from smoking related illnesses and 200 non-smokers die from second-hand smoke.

- Thirty percent of Nova Scotians smoke.
- What is even more alarming is the number of our young people who smoke – a full one quarter of Nova Scotia youth between 15 and 19 are smokers.
- This cannot continue.
- At that rate, 65,000 of children and youth alive today will become regular smokers and 15,000 of them will die of smoking related disease before middle age.
- As Minister of Health for this province – and with the help of our health stakeholders – I will not allow this to happen.
- Most young people try their first cigarette when they're about 12 years old and are taking the first steps towards a lifetime of addiction and tobacco-related health problems.
- And many – even before they ever take that first cigarette – have smoked the equivalent of hundreds.
- I'm referring here to second-hand smoke.
- Young children exposed to second-hand smoke suffer more respiratory illness and infections such as colds, bronchitis, pneumonia and middle ear infections.
- And second-hand smoke is a serious risk factor for children with asthma.
- Sadly, many of these children are exposed to second-hand smoke in the home – where legislation is not possible.
- But as a government we can – and we must – do all we can to protect children and youth.
- And that is the thrust of this legislation.

- Today, I'm pleased to announce the details of the bill titled *An Act to Protect Young Persons and Other Persons from Tobacco Smoke*.
- It's a fairly complex piece of legislation, but it can best be summed up like this:
- **In public places, wherever there are children and youth present, there will be no smoking.**
- I'll repeat that.
- In public places, wherever there are children and youth present, there will be no smoking.
- This legislation – though its focus is on protecting youth – goes beyond that.
- In fact, under the new legislation, most workplaces and public places in the province will provide 100 percent protection from second hand tobacco smoke.
- That includes a total ban in places such as schools and school grounds, shopping malls, taxis, theatres and recreational facilities.
- Let me give you an example of just how inclusive that ban will be.
- For a group such as the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce – with over 2000 business members – approximately 97 percent of those members will be smoke-free.
- Smoking will also be banned in restaurants, bars and clubs – including outdoor patios – and in bingo halls where there are youth allowed, unless it's in a separate, ventilated smoking room where youth are not allowed to go.

- The legislation also makes it illegal for youth to possess tobacco. This is consistent with the Tobacco Control Act, which bans the sale of tobacco to youth.
- If you're not old enough to purchase the product, you're not old enough to possess it. It's that simple.
- However – and I want to make this very clear – possession of tobacco will not be an offense.
- Youth who smoke are not criminals – they are victims of an industry.
- <pause>
- One of the most challenging things a government can do is try to make social change by bringing in legislation.
- About twenty years ago, the government of the day introduced quite a controversial bill – it's sole purpose to protect people.
- That law required the simple act of buckling a seat belt.
- And it was met with considerable resistance.
- Now, most people put on their seatbelts the minute they get into a car without even thinking.
- It takes time to see a real change in people's attitudes and behaviors – change in society.
- But once that change has taken hold – it becomes the norm.
- Younger generations experience the benefits – and few remember the hard battles that were fought.
- Think just for a minute how attitudes have changed about drinking and driving.

- That’s clearly what is happening with smoking.
- Just a little over 10 years ago, there were ashtrays scattered throughout this Legislature. Members sat in committee meetings – such as Public Accounts – and smoked. That would be unacceptable today!
- Instead we have municipalities like the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, and the towns of Wolfville, Kentville, Berwick and New Glasgow all bringing in their own bans on smoking in public places in their communities.
- I’d like to mention here that this provincial legislation will not replace any municipal by-laws. Nor will it prevent any from enacting laws that are more restrictive.
- The tobacco strategy we introduced last October has created a real positive momentum.
- Since then, people have done a tremendous amount of good work across the province to reduce tobacco use, particularly at the community level.
- I applaud all of them for their efforts and I encourage them to continue.
- We’ve seen Community Health Boards designating some of their Wellness Funds for local tobacco initiatives.
- Schools are re-examining policies around smoking on school grounds. This legislation will support them, because it bans in schools and on school grounds. It sets one standard for the province, as recommended by our Youth Advisory Committee.
- Even some restaurants and bars have voluntarily gone smoke free. It makes good business sense to do so.
- There’s no question – smoking will die a natural death.

- I'm sure many business owners recognize that smoking is on the decline and are considering that when they plan for the future.
- <pause>
- This legislation has taken some time to develop. Since we began to develop our tobacco strategy, we have heard from a variety of stakeholders.
- We gave this legislation very careful consideration.
- It's is about health – but it needs the cooperation of business.
- We are truly fortunate to have such passionate people advocating for the health of all Nova Scotians. Your efforts are making a difference.
- We also have heard the concerns of the hospitality industry and I want you to know that we appreciate your input and respect your position.
- I am confident that what we have at the end of this process is fair, effective, workable legislation.
- We've come a long way towards protecting people – especially children and youth – from the dangers of second-hand tobacco smoke.
- And – by effectively reducing the amount of smoking that young people see in public – we are helping to de-normalize smoking for them.
- The less they see it – the less normal it appears, which will help to encourage a future generations of non-smokers.
- <pause>
- As I mentioned before, this legislation isn't a stand-alone solution. It will be supported by all the other elements of our integrated tobacco strategy.
- I'd now like to turn it over to Dr. David Rippey to give an update on our tobacco strategy.

– Thank you.