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Health Canada and Saskatchewan Health

Saskatchewan Tobacco Control Act

Qualitative Research Report

March 2002

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Major Findings

Background

In January 2002, Degelman Research was commissioned by Doug Fast and Associates Ltd., on behalf of Health Canada and Saskatchewan Health, to conduct focus groups to explore public attitudes toward the Saskatchewan Tobacco Control Act which took effect on March 11, 2002. Four focus groups were conducted between March 18 on 19, and stratified as follows: Regina General Public, Regina Youth, Weyburn General Public, and Weyburn Youth. Following are the major findings.

Attitudes Toward Tobacco Companies

Many participants offered negative comments about tobacco companies, which centered around the following arguments:

- Tobacco companies are willing to say or do anything to make money. This argument was more frequent among participants in the two General Public groups.
- Tobacco is addictive, and can control people's lives. This argument was more frequent among participants in the two Youth groups.
- Tobacco products are killing people, and otherwise damaging their health.

It is worth noting that sizable numbers assessed their views on tobacco companies as "neutral". This was more true of participants in the Youth groups and those identifying themselves as smokers in general. These people presented at least one of the following arguments:

- Like any other business, tobacco companies are meeting market demand, and trying to make a living.
- People have a choice as to whether or not to smoke.
- If tobacco companies are being condemned because of the health risks associated with their product, then companies marketing products such as alcohol and pesticides should be similarly condemned. This type of argument was made less frequently.

A few people in each group, more so in the two General Public groups, indicated that their views on tobacco companies had worsened in the past couple of years or so. The most common reasons for this follow.

- More research has been done (and communicated to the public) about the dangers of smoking, both to the smokers and to those around them.
- They had found it difficult to quit smoking, or were still attempting to do so.
- They had learned more about the dangers of smoking in school.

The overwhelming view in all four groups was that tobacco companies are not committed to preventing tobacco sales to minors. Most arguments (presented by the General Public and Youth participants alike) were centered around the idea that tobacco companies view youth as a huge investment or a major market. Some went on to argue that, as such, it would make little sense for tobacco companies to discourage minors from smoking.

Moreover, there was overwhelming agreement that, by positioning tobacco as an adult-only product, this may lead youth to desire tobacco all the more.

Attitudes Toward the New Legislation

Initial Impressions

Most participants were aware of the Tobacco Control Act which took effect in Saskatchewan on March 11, 2002. Furthermore, most participants supported the new legislation, or thought that it was a good idea. This was the case in all groups except the Weyburn Youth group, where initial impressions tended to vary. Reasons for supporting the new legislation centered around the following:

- It is a simple case of, "*out of sight, out of mind*". For example, many argued that covering tobacco products may remove the temptation to purchase cigarettes, especially among experimental smokers.
- Children may think that purchasing tobacco is not as simple as they had originally thought, and it makes tobacco appear less readily accessible as candy and pop.
- It reinforces that there are problems associated with smoking, and may reduce the chances of tobacco use among younger children.
- It may lend support or encouragement to people who would like to quit smoking, or have already done so.
- It may lead retailers to do a better job at enforcing the law.

On the negative side, it was argued very early on in the Weyburn Youth discussion that the new legislation will probably have little, if any, effect on current smokers who have no intention of quitting. (This conclusion was later reached in the other three discussion groups as well.) Moreover, a number of these same participants went on to argue that, regardless of the new legislation, minors will still see their peers smoking, including on or around school property. (This concern was later raised in the Regina Youth group as well.)

Anticipated Impact

Most participants, in the General Public and Youth groups alike, believed that the new legislation would have little impact on adults and teenagers. In many cases, they used themselves as examples: They have already formed an opinion on smoking, and have made the corresponding decision (whether to smoke or not).

However, participants, more so in the General Public groups, did believe that the new legislation had the potential to impact on the views and behavior of younger children. (The twelve years of age and younger category was repeatedly identified as one where children have yet to experiment with, or get addicted to, smoking.)

Participants agreed with the argument that youth would be less likely to become smokers if smoking were viewed as socially unacceptable. However, it was qualified that this argument would be more likely to hold if smoking were viewed as socially unacceptable by the youth's own peer group, and not solely by their parents or other adults. This qualification was offered in all four groups, and was stronger among the Youth participants.

Most concluded that the new legislation was a positive step toward making this happen.

1. Introduction

In January 2002, Degelman Research was commissioned by Doug Fast and Associates Ltd., on behalf of Health Canada and Saskatchewan Health, to conduct focus groups to explore public attitudes toward the Saskatchewan Tobacco Control Act which took effect on March 11, 2002. Following are the major topics covered in the research:

- Attitudes toward tobacco companies.
- Awareness of the Tobacco Control Act.
- Attitudes toward the changes, including overall impressions and anticipated impact.
- Reaction to some of the arguments put forth by special interest groups.
- Additional ideas to discourage youth from smoking.

A moderator's outline used to guide the focus groups was developed in consultation with representatives from Doug Fast and Associates Ltd., Health Canada, and Saskatchewan Health. A copy of the outline is appended to this report.

Four focus groups were conducted on March 18 and 19, 2002, and stratified as follows: Regina General Public, Regina Youth, Weyburn General Public, and Weyburn Youth.

In the case of the Youth groups, all participants were between the ages of 14 and 17. Both of these groups were conducted in the evening, and the consent of parents had been obtained in all cases. In the case of the General Public groups, participants were screened to ensure that no one in the household was employed in retail, by the media, or in the areas of advertising, communications, or market research. It is important to note that participants in the General Public groups were unaware of the topic for discussion prior to attending the focus groups so as to ensure pure randomization, regardless of smoking habits.

A total of forty-one participants—twenty adults and twenty-one youth—took part in the four discussions. Each was paid \$40 for their participation. Demographic profiles of the groups' participants are provided on the following two pages.

PROFILE OF GENERAL PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS

	Regina n=10	Weyburn n=10
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	5	5
Female	5	5
<i>Age</i>		
Under 25	1	2
25 to 34	2	2
35 to 44	2	2
45 to 54	2	2
55 to 64	1	1
65 or over	2	1
<i>Occupation</i>		
Professional/highly technical	2	0
Managerial/business owner	1	1
Sales/clerical	2	3
Laborer	2	3
Homemaker	1	2
Retired	2	1
<i>Education</i>		
Some high school or less	0	2
Completed high school	0	2
Some university/technical school	5	3
Technical school diploma	1	3
University degree	4	0
<i>Total Family Income Before Taxes</i>		
Less than \$25,000	2	0
\$25,000 to \$49,999	4	7
\$50,000 to \$100,000	3	3
over \$100,000	1	0
<i>Household Make-up</i>		
One or more single adults with no children	2	2
Couple with no children living at home	3	3
Single parent	1	0
Couple with children living at home	4	5
<i>Use of Tobacco Products in the Household</i>		
Self only	2	3
Not self, but other household member(s)	1	0
No one in the household uses tobacco products	7	7

PROFILE OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

	Regina n=11	Weyburn n=10
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	5	5
Female	6	5
<i>Age</i>		
14 to 15	4	4
16 to 17	7	6
<i>Personal Smoking Habits</i>		
Have never tried smoking	2	3
Have tried smoking, but do not currently smoke	5	3
Currently smoke	4	4
<i>Best Description of Friends' Smoking Habits</i>		
None have tried it	0	0
Some have tried it, but do not smoke now	0	3
Most have tried it, but do not smoke now	1	3
Some smoke now	6	2
Most smoke now	4	2

STATEMENT OF LIMITATIONS

Focus group sessions seek to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively precise or absolute measures. By reason of the size of the groups, it is understood that the work is exploratory in nature. The findings cannot be projected to any larger population, but were developed for the purpose of qualitative rather than quantitative frame of reference. As such, the findings should be regarded as directional only.

2. Attitudes Toward Tobacco Companies

At the beginning of each discussion, participants were asked to share their views on tobacco companies. Many offered negative comments, which centered around the following arguments:

- Tobacco companies are willing to say or do anything to make money. For example, references were made to the misleading manner in which cigarettes are labeled as “mild”, the numerous ingredients contained in cigarettes which are not listed on the package, and the industry’s attempt to refute the health risks associated with smoking. This argument was more frequent among participants in the two General Public groups. Following are some of their comments.

“The biggest negative I feel is how they (tobacco companies) can refute all those studies and the health risks, and still promote the product.” (Regina General Public)

“They still don’t write down all of the ingredients (on the cigarette packages). The last I heard, there’s like four hundred compounds in tobacco smoke.” (Regina General Public)

“I think they (tobacco companies) will just do and say whatever they have to, to make a buck. I don’t think they have any concerns about health issues that seem quite obvious like lung cancer and stuff like that. They just flatly deny that it exists. I think to take that kind of a stance just proves, to me anyway, that they’re not being upright.” (Weyburn General Public)

“I just think they (tobacco companies) contradict themselves a lot because they have the warnings on the labels and now with the pictures (on the packages). They still don’t have a lot of the chemicals labeled on the package.” (Weyburn General Public)

- Tobacco is addictive, and can control people’s lives. This argument was more frequent among participants in the two Youth groups.

“They (tobacco companies) are trying to make money like any other company. You can’t blame them for that. But, they do put ingredients in cigarettes that are really addictive, and you can blame them for that.” (Regina Youth)

“It’s that buzz (from smoking) that kind of gets you at first. You keep trying to get that buzz.” (Regina Youth)

“It (references made to cigarettes) also ruins lives, and in some ways, it controls your life. Like we go for a smoke during lunch, we go for a smoke after school, we go for a smoke four times after school. Like you just have to have that smoke. You just get into that routine. It controls you somewhat.” (Regina Youth)

“Because it (tobacco) is addictive, they (tobacco companies) make so much money. It’s so addictive.” (Weyburn Youth)

"It seems like they (reference made to cigarettes) have a stronghold on people." (Weyburn Youth)

"They (tobacco companies) kind of like target kids, and they try to get you addicted for life when they advertise to kids." (Weyburn Youth)

- Tobacco products are killing people, and otherwise damaging their health. For example, *"The first thing that comes to me is the damage that's being caused to people's health. I don't really know anything personally about the companies themselves, but that's the first thing I think of, people's health."*, and, *"They (tobacco companies) are selling you things that can, and will, kill you."*

It is worth noting that sizable numbers assessed their views on tobacco companies as "neutral". This was more true of participants in the Youth groups and those identifying themselves as smokers in general. These people presented the following arguments:

- Like any other business, tobacco companies are meeting market demand, and trying to make a living.

"I started smoking when I was in the navy, and aboard ship, we were paying eleven cents a pack because there was no tax on them. Tobacco companies are in the business of making money. There's a demand, and they're feeding that demand." (Regina General Public)

"It's a business for them (tobacco companies). Not that I'm in agreement with them, but it's a business. It's like lots of businesses that aren't really upstanding either." (Weyburn General Public)

"They (tobacco companies) are a business, and they're out to market their product and make a living." (Weyburn General Public)

"I know it's bad for me, but they (tobacco companies) are just trying to make a living." (Regina Youth)

"They (tobacco companies) are not bad guys. They're running a business." (Regina Youth)

"I figure they (tobacco companies) are in business for the profit of it like any other organization would be... to sell their product." (Weyburn Youth)

"They (tobacco companies) just use the addiction towards their advantage, like any other company would. If they can find any leverage for their product, they'll use it." (Weyburn Youth)

"There's a market for it, so they (tobacco companies) are going to provide for one. They're just filling a niche in society." (Weyburn Youth)

- People have a choice as to whether or not to smoke. For example, *"To me, buying a package of cigarettes is like going to the store and buying a box of cereal. I go to the store and buy the kind of cereal I want. I don't smoke so I'm not going to buy any of that product anyway. So, it doesn't matter to me if they're making a lot of money or not. They're not getting any of my money."*, and, *"It's not like they don't warn you enough about it. Like they have it (warning) right on the cigarette pack."*
- If tobacco companies are being condemned because of the health risks associated with their product, then companies marketing products such as alcohol and pesticides should be similarly condemned. This type of argument was made less frequently.

Focus group participants were also asked whether their views on tobacco companies had changed at all in the past couple of years or so. A few people in each group, more so in the two General Public groups, indicated that it had. In each case, their view had worsened. The most common reasons follow.

- More research has been done (and communicated to the public) about the dangers of smoking, both to the smokers and to those around them.

"I think my views have changed just by seeing a lot of the damage tobacco has done that has been brought into the open. And I think that a lot of people realize the damage. There's an ad running showing parents smoking in the room and the effect it would have on their children. So I think it (damage) has been brought to our attention." (Regina General Public)

"It's been advertised more and brought out more into the public eye—the secondhand smoke plus all the chemicals in cigarettes that we don't know about and this type of stuff. The advertising campaigns started probably in the last five years, four years." (Weyburn General Public)

"At one time, you used to watch movies and they all smoked on there and you know, it looked fashionable to smoke. Society doesn't accept it like they used to. And I don't think that I ever placed it (the blame) on the tobacco company as much as, 'There's that person smoking at the table behind me again!'" (Weyburn General Public)

"I think that when you're young, you're told so much that it (smoking) is bad. You just know it's bad. I guess the culture's so immersed in it. I think you just sort of stop caring. But then, when you see its effects on people and how they're addictive and what it's doing to them, then you realize how bad it really is." (Regina Youth)

- They had found it difficult to quit smoking, or were still attempting to do so. As one Regina General Public participant explained, *"I think that when I smoked, my views (toward tobacco companies) were neutral. I really didn't care. It was after I quit—and it was a real struggle to quit, real difficult to quit—then I started to resent these tobacco companies. Just having the product around. And now I really feel strongly about it."* A number of Youth participants also admitted they had quit smoking, or were attempting to do so. One youth explained, *"A few years ago, I didn't smoke. I thought what they (some of the other group participants) thought. It (tobacco) is just another product. I don't agree with them. I found it very difficult to quit."*
- They had learned more about the dangers of smoking in school. For example, a couple of Weyburn youth referred to a Grade 9 research project which had made them more aware of the health risks associated with smoking.

"I learned more about it (smoking) in health class this year (Grade 9). Before, I thought, 'Oh, you can get a couple of diseases or cancer.' But I found out that you can get a lot more cancers that don't even have anything to do with lung cancer. And the other effects are disgusting." (Weyburn Youth)

"They elaborate (in Grade 9). You just learn a lot more. It's a lot more graphic, too." (Weyburn Youth)

"I probably got turned off by tobacco companies more as I got older because I learned about it (smoking) more in school... what it can do to you." (Regina Youth)

Participants were also asked whether they were aware of any steps that the tobacco companies have taken in an effort to improve their image. Changes to cigarette packages (labeling of ingredients and graphics associated with the health risks) were raised in all four focus groups. However, it was quickly countered by participants in all groups that these measures were only taken in response to pressure from the Federal Government or the Surgeon General.

"I think all that stuff is legislated though, isn't it? I mean, they have to put that stuff on. It's not that they (tobacco companies) want to improve their image." (Weyburn General Public)

"I haven't seen anything that the tobacco companies have done under their own free will to help people to stop smoking. I think it's all been government. I don't think they (tobacco companies) have done anything beneficial to the public." (Weyburn General Public)

"I don't think that the tobacco companies would ever really say, 'Here, our product is bad. Buy it.' " (Regina Youth)

"In order for them to both keep themselves (tobacco companies) productive and have a positive image, there has to be a double standard that they have to promote." (Weyburn Youth)

Sponsorship of events (such as car racing) was also raised in both the Weyburn General Public and Weyburn Youth groups. Moreover, support for this type of public relations endeavor was strong, as it was seen as a way for the tobacco companies to, "give something back to the community".

Finally, only one participant (a Weyburn youth) was aware of the tobacco industry's involvement with Operation ID. With no prompting, this participant argued that the signage was nothing more than "whitewashing". As he explained, *"They (tobacco companies) had to do it. They're just trying to make themselves look good, and so they are targeting kids in this way."*

The overwhelming view in all four groups was that tobacco companies are not committed to preventing tobacco sales to minors. Most arguments (presented by the General Public and Youth participants alike) were centered around the idea that tobacco companies view youth as a huge investment or a major market. Some went on to argue that, as such, it would make little sense for tobacco companies to discourage minors from smoking.

"They (tobacco companies) like the fact that there's a lot of negative advertising towards kids to tell them not to smoke and that it's harmful to their health. Let's face it. We were all kids, and what you can't do or you're told not to do, you want to do and you will do. It (smoking) becomes a big thing then." (Regina General Public)

"They (tobacco companies) want minors to smoke. That's their market. They want them to buy the cigarettes." (Weyburn General Public)

"We're the new generation of smokers." (Regina Youth)

"They (tobacco companies) know their game. They know minors are smoking." (Regina Youth)

"I think it's like 80% of smokers start when they're underage. It an investment to get kids smoking." (Weyburn Youth)

"They (tobacco companies) have to get kids hooked. If you get kids not smoking, where's the future market? How many grown adults start smoking?" (Weyburn Youth)

Participants then were presented with the argument that the youth programs sponsored by tobacco companies emphasize that tobacco is an adult-only product. They were presented with the further argument that, in doing so, this may lead youth to desire tobacco all the more if they want to act like adults. This argument drew overwhelming agreement in all four groups, including from Youth participants. The following two theories were put forth by participants.

- Youth often want what is unattainable or off-limits, as it is viewed as a challenge.

"It makes it more exciting to them (youth) to smoke. They're doing adult things, and they're not supposed to be, and they're getting away with it." (Regina General Public)

"It makes it more of a challenge (to youth) when they're not supposed to have something." (Regina General Public)

"If kids see something that they shouldn't have until they're older, they'll want it all the more." (Weyburn General Public)

"It makes them (youth) feel more powerful if they can get it in their hands." (Weyburn General Public)

"It makes you want it more. Teenagers always want stuff they can't have." (Regina Youth)

"You just want to try it (smoking) because you're not suppose to try it." (Regina Youth)

"It's like anything else unattainable. If they say you can't have it, you want it all the more." (Regina Youth)

"Something you can't have, you want more. That's the way I look at it." (Weyburn Youth)

"The more you can't have something, the more you want it, and the better it feels when you get it." (Weyburn Youth)

- Youth want to grow up fast, or at least appear grown up.

"You want to be an adult." (Regina Youth)

"There are still many older idols who smoke." (Regina Youth)

"In the magazines, you always see some older person who looks really cool to you and then you think, 'I want to look like that.', and that's why you buy what they buy." (Weyburn Youth)

"Kids want to grow up fast. They want to look older." (Weyburn Youth)

3. Awareness of the Saskatchewan Tobacco Control Act

Most participants were aware of recent changes to the way tobacco is displayed in retail outlets. This was the case in both the General Public and Youth groups. For example, most had heard or read that all tobacco products have to be placed out of sight behind retail counters so that the public cannot see them. Some of these same people also were aware that all advertising and promotional items related to tobacco products were no longer being allowed in retail outlets.

The most common sources of information reported by participants include:

- By visiting the stores and seeing the changes firsthand. This was more common among Youth participants.
- Through television news reports. This was more common among General Public participants in both Regina and Weyburn.
- Through classmates and parents. This was raised by Youth participants in both Regina and Weyburn. However, it received far fewer mentions than actually seeing the changes firsthand.
- Through the Regina Leader-Post. This was raised by participants in both the Regina and Weyburn General Public groups. However, it received far fewer mentions than television newscasts.
- On the radio. This was raised by only a couple of participants in the Regina General Public group.

4. Attitudes Toward the New Legislation

4.1 Initial Impressions

The moderator then provided details of the new Saskatchewan legislation which took effect on March 11, 2002, and asked participants whether they supported it or not.

Most participants supported the legislation, or thought that it was a good idea. This was the case in all groups except the Weyburn Youth group, where initial impressions tended to vary. Reasons for supporting the new legislation centered around the following:

- It is a simple case of, “out of sight, out of mind”. For example, many argued that covering tobacco products may remove the temptation to purchase cigarettes, especially among experimental smokers.

“Well, the impact it had on me when I walked in (the store), I wasn’t expecting it so I was a little surprised, and then I thought, ‘Wow, you really don’t see it (tobacco). You really don’t know it’s there.’ I think after awhile, you’ll even forget it’s even there.” (Regina General Public)

“Maybe a few years from now, it will reduce the number of kids from starting smoking because out of sight, out of mind.” (Regina General Public)

“It’s the visual impact of something in front of you. If they want to make you conscious of it, they put it right in front of you. The bigger the billboard on the highway, the more that you’re conscious of it.” (Regina General Public)

“Out of sight out of mind. If there’s less advertising, you don’t think about it as much. If you don’t see it, you don’t want it.” (Weyburn General Public)

“I just think it’s a positive step. You either promote cigarettes or you don’t, and it’s probably time to go with the non-promotion of cigarettes.” (Weyburn General Public)

“I think it’s a good start as well. Remove the temptation. If it’s not up there in full view, especially the young kids, won’t be tempted to grab it.” (Weyburn General Public)

“If you don’t see it, it doesn’t tempt you.” (Regina Youth)

“Just like everybody was saying, if you don’t see a chocolate bar, you won’t buy it. It’s like impulse buying.” (Regina Youth)

“Kids won’t see it, so they may not ask about it. It’s like candy in a store. You see something new to you and ask, ‘What’s that? What does it taste like?’.” (Regina Youth)

“Younger kids may not see it, they may not notice it, they may not want it.” (Regina Youth)

- Children may think that purchasing tobacco is not as simple as they had originally thought, and it makes tobacco appear less readily accessible as items such as candy and pop.

"I think it makes it a little harder—or at least appear a little harder—for kids to buy cigarettes. It may not stop all kids, but it may stop some kids." (Weyburn General Public)

"For the younger kids, they may not think it (tobacco) is as easy to get. They may not even know what necessarily to ask for if they can't see it." (Regina Youth)

"It will keep kids from knowing where to buy cigarettes. They'll see people smoking, but they may not learn where to get it from as early on as they would otherwise." (Regina Youth)

- It reinforces that there are problems associated with smoking, and may reduce the chances of tobacco use among younger children.

"From the time you're big enough to look over that (store) counter, and even though you might not know what it (tobacco) is, it becomes so familiar to you that once you're old enough to know what it is, it seems all the more acceptable." (Regina General Public)

"The whole idea of kids. When you're growing up and you're shopping with your mom or dad, you see it all the time and it makes it seem like such an acceptable thing to do, when it's right in front of your face everyday." (Regina General Public)

"I think it reinforces the negative attitudes toward smoking." (Regina General Public)

"I think people will start wondering why it's covered up. Like the younger kids will grow up wondering, 'Why are these cigarettes hidden? It must be something bad.'" (Regina Youth)

"It's just another sign that it's bad... that's why it's covered up." (Regina Youth)

"If it's covered up, it's obviously bad." (Weyburn Youth)

"If it can't be shown, it can't be good. This might affect younger kids who haven't started smoking yet." (Weyburn Youth)

- It may lend support or encouragement to people who would like to quit smoking, or have already done so. This was also seen as a way of possibly giving that extra nudge to closet smokers (believed to include parents who hide their habit from their children).

"The biggest thing, besides kids, is the few people that I know that are trying to quit smoking. It's going to help them out. Just the association with seeing it (tobacco) and trying to quit. I have friends who go to bars and once they get the urge, they leave because the addiction is so immense." (Regina General Public)

"I think for people that are trying to quit, it's a supportive gesture." (Regina General Public)

"It would be nice to think that the parents would be looking at their own smoking habits and saying, 'The government wants to curb smoking in young people. What am I doing to encourage that?'. " (Weyburn General Public)

"If the inkling is back there that, 'Maybe I should quit.', it'll probably help. But those who have been smoking twenty to thirty years think, 'This is my house, and I'll be damned if the government is going to tell me whether I can smoke or not.' " (Weyburn General Public)

"If someone is trying to quit, it'll be supportive of their decision to quit." (Weyburn Youth)

"Some of my friends are actually quitting smoking now. They just might take that one extra step to quit if they see that the stores are taking a step to not promote it." (Weyburn Youth)

- It may lead retailers to do a better job at enforcing the law. This was raised in Weyburn, where some minors reported some success in purchasing tobacco themselves, especially if their friends were on duty at a store. For example, *"I would like to think that for a retailer, say a seventeen year old comes in, he'll probably take a little more time to question the kid on his age rather than quickly going through the hassle of grabbing underneath the covers (to get the product)."*

On the negative side, it was argued very early on in the Weyburn Youth discussion that the new legislation will probably have little, if any, effect on current smokers who have no intention of quitting. (As will be discussed in the next sub-section, this conclusion was later reached in the other three discussion groups as well.) Following are some of the opening remarks made in the Weyburn Youth group.

"If you want them (cigarettes) that badly, you're going to get them, no matter what."

"If you're already smoking, you have the addiction. It doesn't matter if you see cigarettes or not."

"If you really wanted to smoke, I don't think it would really make a difference if you can't see cigarettes in a store. You'll just ask for them."

Moreover, a number of these same participants went on to argue that, regardless of the new legislation, minors will still see their peers smoking, including on or around school property. For example, *"I think you will still see it enough. Not so much in public places, but on the streets like outside schools, malls and restaurants. There are enough people smoking that little kids will still see it. Like you can't be totally away from it at anytime."*

and *"I don't think it would really matter if you can't see them (cigarettes) in a store because you're going to see it everywhere else."*

As will be discussed later in this report, some of the Regina Youth participants raised similar concerns when asked to suggest additional ideas to discourage youth from smoking.

4.2 Anticipated Impact

Following the opportunity to share initial impressions, participants were asked whether the new legislation would have an impact on how the general public views tobacco products and smoking. Most participants, in the General Public and Youth groups alike, believed that it would have little impact on adults and teenagers. In many cases, they used themselves as examples: They have already formed an opinion on smoking, and have made the corresponding decision (whether to smoke or not). Following is just a sampling of the comments made.

"Adults, they're already addicted, so it's not going to matter to them whether they're covered or not." (Regina General Public)

"People that I know who are smokers, they seem to be so addicted, that I don't think the new law will have any effect. I think they'll smoke just as much as they did before." (Regina General Public)

"I never think about tobacco. It won't affect me at all. My brother smokes, and I guess he'll continue to smoke. It's a personal choice." (Regina General Public)

"The people who are really hooked will go outside and still smoke wherever they can." (Weyburn General Public)

"Myself, as a smoker, I can't see it deterring me." (Weyburn General Public)

"As a smoker, I mean yes, I should quit. But what's it to me? All I have to say is, 'Yes, I'd like a pack of cigarettes.' They (retailers) are the ones who have to dig in the drawer and get them so, for myself, it won't make a difference." (Weyburn General Public)

"It's not going to change things if they're already addicted." (Regina Youth)

"I don't think anything will change my views on smoking. It's a part of my life now." (Regina Youth)

"It doesn't matter. I don't smoke at all so it's not going to change anything for me." (Regina Youth)

"A non-smoker might agree with having the tobacco covered up, but a smoker might not think too much of it because if you've been smoking for that many years, you're not going to stop because they're covered up." (Weyburn Youth)

"I don't smoke. It's just never appealed to me so I don't even look at them in stores." (Weyburn Youth)

However, participants, more so in the General Public groups, did believe that the new legislation had the potential to impact on the views and behavior of younger children. The twelve years of age and younger category was repeatedly identified as one where children have yet to experiment with, or get addicted to, smoking. In fact, the focus group participants with children expressed hope that the new legislation would have the intended impact on their own children and grandchildren.

"It will certainly have an effect on how smoking is presented to children." (Regina General Public)

"It may affect people who haven't already talked to their kids to say, 'Well, it (smoking) is bad, and you shouldn't do it.'" (Regina General Public)

"The whole flashiness of cigarettes. They'll have taken that away from the younger kids." (Regina General Public)

"Talking to the younger kids, they seem to have some pretty good attitudes towards not smoking and that, I think, is coming from the things they're hearing about how bad it is, the health issues, and all that stuff. I think they realize that it's stinky and it's not nice, and I think this is just one more thing to add to the pile that's going to help change that." (Weyburn General Public)

"I think it'll be an encouragement to those young kids who are just starting to make the purchase or haven't begun smoking." (Weyburn General Public)

"It will help with the younger kids. It will help give the picture that smoking is not good." (Regina Youth)

"They (reference made to younger children) don't have views yet. They don't have a set pack of morals and values all sorted out yet." (Weyburn Youth)

Participants agreed with the argument that youth would be less likely to become smokers if smoking were viewed as socially unacceptable. However, it was qualified that this argument would be more likely to hold if smoking were viewed as socially unacceptable by the youth's own peer group, and not solely by their parents or other adults. This qualification was offered in all four groups, and was stronger among the Youth participants. Following are some of their comments.

"I think if younger kids still see us doing it, this may make them start smoking. If we don't, they probably won't." (Regina Youth)

"It's hard to smoke if everyone around you, all of your friends, are against it." (Regina Youth)

"If it was frowned upon, not so much by my parents, but by others I hang with, then that would be different." (Weyburn Youth)

"I see that (unacceptability among peers) as a form of exile. If people see it that way, they're going to be much less inclined to participate in that for fear of being shunned by their friends." (Weyburn Youth)

"Up until a certain age, you listen to what your parents tell you. Then, once you start hanging out with your friends, you listen to their views and if everyone is opposed to it, you'll likely be." (Weyburn Youth)

Nevertheless, with little prompting, most concluded that the new legislation was a step in the right direction. Following are some of the closing comments made by participants about the new legislation.

"I think if there's one less influence, one less stimulus influencing them (reference made to children) not to smoke, it's got to have an effect. It's one less reason for them to smoke." (Regina General Public)

"There's a whole host of things (referring to influences on children), but to take away one little segment of that host of things reduces somewhat the influence to begin smoking." (Regina General Public)

"I'm not sure just putting it out of sight is the only thing that should have been done, but it's a start." (Weyburn General Public)

"Any little positive thing that may have a positive effect should be done. This is one of them." (Weyburn General Public)

"Who wants to see people die? Like I don't want my little sister, like when she's twenty or thirty, up in the hospital with cancer or something like that." (Regina Youth)

"They at least shouldn't give up completely. They might as well try something." (Regina Youth)

"At least they're trying to slow it (smoking) down, to stop it." (Weyburn Youth)

"It's more that they're trying to do something... they have to keep trying." (Weyburn Youth)

5. Additional Ideas to Discourage Youth from Smoking

In a concluding question, participants were asked to suggest additional ideas to discourage youth from smoking. A summary of the more popular ideas follows.

Education

This idea arose in all four focus groups, and was one which required no prompting from the moderator. Moreover, it was seen by both General Public and Youth participants alike as the most effective means to discourage youth from smoking. Participants offered a number of suggestions to ensure that anti-smoking programs are effective. These are:

- Begin the programming in earlier grades, and make it a part of the health curriculum in both elementary and high school. The recommended time to begin ranged anywhere from Grades 4 to 6.
- Make the program content more hard-hitting and graphic, even in the younger grades. It is worth noting that the "Voice Box Industry" television ad was isolated in a number of groups as one which was especially hard-hitting and effective. (This ad featured a woman inhaling a cigarette through a hole in her neck.)
- Have students work on a research project dealing with the health risks associated with smoking. This idea was a popular one in both Youth groups. As one participant observed, *"Then kids can do their own research, and draw their own conclusions."*
- Bring speakers into the classroom who can give a person account of how smoking has damaged their health or ruined their lives.
- Have graphic posters showing the effects of smoking, and hang them in places where children gather. Suggested locales included schools, libraries, rinks, and other types of recreational centers.

Designating More Spaces as Smoke-Free

In most groups, this idea was raised by the moderator. While it was also viewed by most as a way of discouraging youth from smoking, it was apparent that a number of the smokers in the focus groups were less supportive of the measure. Nevertheless, it was argued by participants that this step would further demonstrate the social unacceptability of smoking, and inconvenience the people who want to smoke.

Following are some of the comments made by participants in the two Youth groups.

"They're not going to walk six blocks to smoke." (Regina)

"When the malls cut out smoking, I stopped going to the mall." (Regina)

If every public place is smoke-free, then they've got nowhere to go except their own home or a friend's home." (Weyburn)

"If they do outlaw it in public places, it kind of deems it as like not publicly acceptable." (Weyburn)

It is noteworthy that a number of Youth participants in both groups did argue that it is hypocritical to restrict smoking in public places and cover tobacco in stores, and then allow students to smoke outside of their own schools.

Greater Advertising Restrictions Placed on the Tobacco Industry

This idea was also viewed by most as a way of discouraging youth from smoking. As a couple of Youth participants observed, and others agreed, *"You're seeing somebody that you want to be doing it (smoking), so you figure this is a head start to what I can become."*, and, *"Like, when you see it (reference made to advertising) at sports events and stuff, it makes it look like athletes support it. Athletes are like these great people who are in shape."*

Increasing the Price of Tobacco

This measure drew mixed responses in all groups. For example, many participants (including some of the smokers in the groups) seemed to agree that this measure would cause some smokers to quit or at least cut back. One Weyburn participant felt that the additional revenue raised from any such increase should be put into an anti-smoking campaign targeted to youth. This suggestion was strongly supported by other group participants.

However, some argued that increasing the price of tobacco may merely lead youth to take money from their parents' wallets, or borrow the money from friends. It is worth noting that this argument was stronger among the Youth participants.

Fining Youth Caught Smoking

This measure arose on its own in a number of groups, and drew mixed responses in the two Youth groups. While some said that a fine or the threat of their parents knowing about their smoking would be a deterrent, others disagreed. These people argued that the threat (or in some cases, the actual receipt) of the \$175 liquor fine has not stopped them from drinking alcohol.

On the other hand, most participants in the two General Public groups tended to support this measure, and predicted that it would be effective in reducing the number of youth who smoke. However, they quickly added that it would be unrealistic to expect adequate policing and enforcement.

**Health Canada & Saskatchewan Health
Tobacco Control Act
Moderator's Guide—Final**

1. Introductions

Standard focus group introduction, including research company identification, explanation of a focus group, expectations of the participants, and the intent of the research.

Participant introductions (youth): Age and smoking habits (i.e. currently smoke, have tried smoking, and have never smoked).

Participant introductions (general public): Household make-up (including ages of children living at home) and smoking habits (both personal and other household members).

2. Attitudes Toward Tobacco Companies

1. I'd like to start off by talking about tobacco companies. Generally speaking, what is your view of tobacco companies—is it generally positive, negative, or do you really not have an opinion on them either way?

2. *If positive or negative*, Why do you feel that way?

3. Have your views of tobacco companies changed at all in the past couple of years or so?

4 ^a _{ab} *If so*, How have they changed, and ^b why?

5. Can you think of anything that the tobacco companies have done in an effort to improve their image?

6 _{ab} *If so*, Do you think it has been effective? Why or ^a why ^b not?

7 _{ab} Do you think that tobacco ^a companies are committed to preventing tobacco sales to minors? Why do you feel that way? ^b

8 _{ab} It's been argued that the youth programs sponsored by tobacco companies merely emphasize that tobacco is an adult-only product. In doing so, tobacco is made out to be a forbidden fruit which youth may only desire all the more if they want to act like adults. Do you tend to agree or disagree with this argument? Please explain.

3. Awareness of Changes to the Tobacco Control Act

9a-f a Have you heard anything in the media dealing with the way in which tobacco is displayed in stores?

6

b If so, what did you hear?

c Where did you hear it?

d Did you hear anything else, either in the media or from some other source?

Again, what did you hear, and from whom?

e f

4. Attitudes Toward the Changes

The moderator will explain... Up until last week, retailers were able to display cigarette packages openly to the public, such as behind the counter at the till. The store could display the cigarette packages in long vertical rows, which could make the color of the packages stand out or the name of the cigarettes stand out. This form of display is sometimes referred to as a "power wall".

New provincial legislation which took effect on March 11th banned the use of power walls. This means that all tobacco products have to be placed out of sight behind retail counters so that the public cannot see them.

10 ab a Do you support this type of legislation—in other words, do you think it is a good idea?

b Why or why not?

Probe as necessary (i.e. if it doesn't arise on its own)...

11 ab a Do you think that, in time, it will have an impact on how the public views tobacco products and smoking? Please explain. b

12 ab a Do you think that, in time, it will make the public less inclined to use tobacco? Please explain. b

13 ab a Now let's talk specifically about youth. Do you think that the changes will, in time, have an impact on how they view tobacco products and smoking? Please explain. b

14 ab a Do you think it will make youth less inclined to use tobacco, either now or in the future? Please explain. b

If denormalization hasn't arise...

15 Youth is a primary target of this new legislation. For example, research has shown that almost 90% of regular smokers begin using tobacco at or before the age of eighteen. Some people say that youth would be less likely to become smokers if smoking were viewed as a behavior which is not socially acceptable. Do you agree or disagree with this?

16abc Do you think that this new legislation—banning the display and promotion of tobacco products in stores—will help in making tobacco appear less socially acceptable? Please explain. ^a

^c
If no, Is it at least a step in the right direction?

17abc Do you think this new legislation is going to affect you (and your family—in the case of the adult groups) in any way? If so, how? If no, why not? ^a

18abc How about your friends (and relatives—in the case of the adult groups). Do you think it's going to affect them in any way? If so, how? If no, why not? ^b

5. Additional Ideas

19 Can you think of other ways to discourage youth from smoking?

Possible ideas to raise for discussion include higher prices for tobacco, more smoke-free spaces, school programs focusing more on the health risks of smoking, greater advertising restrictions placed on the industry, and fining youth caught smoking.