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Support for Tobacco Retail Display Bans in Ontario

Background

The tobacco industry uses point-of-sale displays to promote its products. Tobacco industry documents show the importance the industry attaches to these displays to achieve “optimal product exposure.”¹

One purpose of tobacco retail display bans is to discourage young people from starting to smoke. In an experimental evaluation, Wakefield et al. (2006) show that cigarette package displays increase children’s perception that cigarettes are easy to obtain and facilitate their recall of brand names.²

In an Ontario survey of youth aged 11 to 18 years, 85% of respondents spontaneously recalled convenience stores as a place where they had seen cigarettes, over 75% said they visited convenience stores at least once a week, and over 40% spontaneously named at least one cigarette brand.³

Bans on the display of tobacco products at the point of sale are expected to result in decreased rates of smoking initiation among young people, decreased rates of smoking in the general population and fewer relapses among quitters.⁴ This update reviews progress in legislation to ban or restrict retail displays of tobacco products in Canada and elsewhere, and presents evidence of public support for the banning of retail displays in Ontario.

Jurisdictions Banning or Restricting Tobacco Retail Displays

In **Canada**, a tobacco retail display ban is in effect or about to take effect in:

- Nunavut (2004)
- Prince Edward Island (2006)
- Nova Scotia (2007)
- Ontario (2008)
- Québec (2008)

Restrictions (no visibility if minors have access) are in effect in:

- Saskatchewan (2002)
- Manitoba (2004)
- Northwest Territories (2006)

Internationally, tobacco retail display bans are in effect in:

- Iceland (2001)
- Thailand (2005)

Other jurisdictions that have considered or are actively considering restrictions on the retail display of tobacco products include Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Support for Retail Display Bans in Ontario

The majority of Ontario adults support tobacco retail display bans (see Table 1).

Table 1: Public Opinion Support for Banning Tobacco Retail Displays, by Age, Ontario Adults, 2004-2006

“In stores tobacco products should be kept under the counter so that they are out of sight of children and young people.”			
	<u>2004</u> (n = 1197)	<u>2005</u> (n = 793)	<u>2006</u> (n = 977)
<u>Age Group</u>	AGREE*	AGREE*	AGREE*
18-24	72%	81%	86%
25-44	77%	83%	85%
45-64	70%	83%	81%
65+	73%	74%	78%
TOTAL SAMPLES	73%	81%	83%

Notes: *AGREE = Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree. For all years, estimates for age group 18-24 have moderate sampling variability and should be interpreted with caution; for 2005 and 2006, estimates for age group 65+ have moderate sampling variability and should be interpreted with caution.

Source: CAMH Monitor Survey of Ontario Adults, 2004; 2005; 2006; data analysis by OTRU

Concluding Note

Tobacco retail display bans are a key component of comprehensive tobacco control strategies. The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* (2006) eliminated countertop displays and power wall “enhancements” in May 2006. The complete ban on tobacco retail displays takes effect on May 31, 2008. Ontario will be in a strong position to evaluate the impact of this ban, aided by an infrastructure that includes monitoring surveys of tobacco-related behaviour, attitudes and opinions among youth and adults.

References

1. Lavack AM, Toth G. Tobacco point-of-purchase promotion: examining tobacco industry documents. *Tobacco Control*. 2006;15:377-84.
2. Wakefield M, Germain D, Durkin S, Henriksen L. An experimental study of effects on schoolchildren of exposure to point-of-sale cigarette advertising and pack displays. *Health Education Research*. 2006;21(3):338-47.
3. Non-Smokers’ Rights Association. *The Influence of Tobacco Powerwall Advertising on Children*. Richmond Hill, ON: J. Gottheil Marketing Communications Inc.; 2005 Mar. [cited 2007 March 26]. Available from: http://www.nsra-adnf.ca/cms/file/pdf/Tobacco_Powerwalls.pdf
4. Tilson Consulting. *Restrictions on the Retail Display of Tobacco Products: Policy Analysis*. Ottawa, ON: Tilson Consulting; 2004 Aug. [cited 2007 March 26] A report prepared for Smoke-Free Nova Scotia. Available from: <http://www.smokefreens.ca/displayban.pdf>