

Bill 60 –Law Amendments to the Smoke-Free Places Act & Tobacco Access Act

Good afternoon everyone,

I'm here today to speak to you on behalf of the College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia (CDHNS) about the impact of tobacco use on oral health.

As we all know, tobacco use has long been proven to be harmful to a person's health. What most people don't realize is that tobacco use, whether smoking or chewing tobacco, has very negative effects on oral health.

Oral health care providers have seen those negative effects. Two of these are gum disease and oral cancer. Both of these diseases have life altering consequences.

Gum disease:

- loss of the supporting structure to the teeth (bone, gum)
- the look of stained, diseased teeth and dry mouth
- loss of the teeth themselves, impacting quality of life

Oral cancer:

- loss of your tongue
- loss of part of your face
- loss of life

We believe that the present Smoke-Free Places Act and Tobacco Access Act need to be amended to include flavored tobacco products, waterpipe (hookah) and e-cigarettes. The Act also needs to be amended to include menthol as a flavoring that cannot be sold in Nova Scotia.

Flavored tobacco products are often the first choice for youths when wanting to experiment with tobacco. According to a Canadian youth smoking survey done in 2012:

- Almost half of grades 6-12 students in Nova Scotia report that they have used flavored tobacco products
 - Taste is less harsh, therefore more likely that they'll continue to use and increases the chance of addiction
- 1/3 of youths use menthol - taste less harsh (seeming harmless), leading to addiction
- Flavored dip and chew tobacco are also used in Nova Scotia by school and university students while playing hockey, football and baseball

Flavored tobacco products make it easier for youths to get addicted to tobacco and develop gum disease and oral cancer.

It's important to highlight that tobacco use is highest in people with lower education and income.

- Don't have private dental insurance
- Can't afford to go for regular dental visits
- Less likely to be monitored by a dentist or dental hygienist
- Less likely to be screened for gum disease & oral cancer
- More likely that cancer will go undetected – leading to premature death

It's always a tragedy to diagnose someone, especially a young person, with oral cancer. All too often, it's someone who is using chewing tobacco or who smokes. Unfortunately, often this cancer goes undetected for too long and treatment is unsuccessful.

Newer products on the market, such as E-cigarettes, also have harmful effects on the mouth. They contain harmful chemicals & may also contain nicotine.

For these reasons, CDHNS:

- supports Health Canada in advising that Canadians not use e-cigarettes.
- asks that e-cigarettes have the same regulatory controls as tobacco products and be included in the Smoke-Free Places Act and Tobacco Access Act

It's important that we reduce or eliminate health risks and their associated harms by strengthening the Smoke-Free Places Act and Tobacco Access Act.

The amendments should include the same regulatory control on waterpipes/hookah, e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco products (including menthol) as for regular tobacco products.

CDHNS believes that:

- Flavored tobacco products should not be sold in Nova Scotia
- E-cigarettes and waterpipes/hookah should not be allowed to be used indoors in public places.
- E-cigarettes should be kept out of view in stores
- E-cigarettes should not be sold to minors
- E-cigarettes should not be allowed to have point-of-sales promotion
- E-cigarettes should not be sold in pharmacies and other places where tobacco products are not allowed to be sold

We realize that communicating the new regulations to affected business owners takes time. Therefore we recommend a fix implementation date within the next 6 months.

Thank you,

Paulette Hawksworth, RDH

On behalf of College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia