

Good Evening and thank you for this opportunity to address Bill 60.

I am here today to represent our Kingston-Greenwood Community Health Board. I speak as Chair of that Board.

I am also standing here as a cancer survivor and as a citizen of this province, and one who is:

- ◆ Interested in and concerned about the health of our citizens,
- ◆ Concerned about the excessive but avoidable costs associated with treating chronic diseases associated with long term tobacco use; and, in particular;
- ◆ I am extremely concerned about the return to the normalization of tobacco use by our impressionable youth through the advertizing of eye-catching, flavor-appealing, fancy-labeled and lure-promoting tobacco substances and products that can exacerbate smoking initiation, habits and addictions.

Our Community Health Board has been advocating for smoking by-laws and legislation for the past several years and we were instrumental in helping bring about the Smoke-free Places Act, the Smoke Free Kings group and we are currently engaged with promoting Smoke Free Outdoor spaces in Kings County.

Our Board is in support of Bill 60, as am I. We are also, however, advocating for the inclusion of menthol tobacco into this bill as we strongly feel that menthol smoking is an equally concerning product to our health and can contribute further to addictive behaviors in our youth.

With the tobacco industry targeting youth in its advertising in order to attract new smokers and the preference for menthol cigarettes being used by certain demographic groups, the marketing of menthol cigarettes can be an enticing factor for this demographic (least likely to smoke and youth) into addictive behaviors. We therefore urge the government to include this flavored product (menthol tobacco) in Bill 60.

During the past 12 years we have made positive and meaningful gains in curbing tobacco use in this province – moving ourselves away from a culture of entrenched smoking habits that were causing major health risks and concurrent issues, not only to the individuals who were smoking tobacco products, but also to those of us who were exposed to and required to endure the effects of second-hand smoke in public places.

We need to stand proud for initiating and sustaining these earlier smoking initiatives that have shown to be effective in promoting more positive wellness enhancing behaviors (decline in smoking rates) and for providing healthier public spaces for those individuals who choose not to smoke.

To allow new and emerging trends with unregulated smoking products and practices to evolve and potentially explode within our communities (such as the use of water pipes, e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco), will quickly erode any previous gains we have achieved, while contributing to more widespread cancer rates and other smoking related health issues such as addictions, heart disease and COPD.

The increasing availability and use of these products in our communities (sale and widespread use of e-cigarette, designated smoking spaces and water pipe cafes) are negatively affecting the smoking habits of our youth and are playing a role in renormalizing smoking as an acceptable behavior.

Especially alarming is the increase of smoking in females and the increasing experimentation with these newer smoking products by youth as seen in public spaces such as in restaurants and cafes, at sports events and on public transit systems.

We, as a community, need also to be concerned about the unknown composition, dangerous chemicals, and cancer causing factors emitted from these smoking devices and emerging into our previously regulated smoke free public spaces. The direct risks to the health of consumers as well as the second hand smoking risks to non users, and, in particular the vulnerable sectors of our communities, will surely undo any previous health gains we have accomplished.

In May, 2014 our Board forwarded our smoking concerns to Minister Glavine requesting that his government give serious consideration to opening the existing legislation while aiming to make the current law more inclusive. In our correspondence, we expressed our concern on the issues being dealt with in these proposed amendments.

We are aware of the powerful influence advertizing plays on youth non smokers, the enticement of youth to begin smoking, their subsequent smoking habits and the numerous ways tobacco is presented for sale and use, much of which is slanted toward attracting a young and vulnerable audience.

Let us not deceive ourselves - Smoke is Smoke and Tobacco is Tobacco – there is do disguising it! It harms individuals and can cause death. And second hand tobacco smoke is a known carcinogenic substance.

As a onetime smoker of short duration, I chose Menthol cigarettes – I seriously doubt if I would ever had smoked if menthol was not available. I actually did not like the smell or taste of tobacco – but I could tolerate menthol smoking back then - and when I did smoke, I convinced myself that I was doing myself a favor by smoking menthol flavored cigarettes.

The conclusions in a Research paper (Menthol cigarettes and smoking initiation: a tobacco industry perspective) by Kim Klausner, University of California*, is that “Menthol is a prominent design feature used by cigarette manufacturers to attract and retain new, younger smokers”.

Today, I can understand why someone would smoke menthol cigarettes who might not otherwise enjoy smoking and how our young people could use this product (less offensive to them) as a stepping stone before indulging in more serious smoking products. It would be the tobacco of choice for a particular segment of the smoking culture because of its acceptability (flavor) thus opening the door towards smoking addictions.

Later in my life and following cancer treatment, I received radiation to my chest area and have subsequently experienced an increased sensitivity to smoke of any

kind causing me to have coughing spasms, watery and itchy eyes and nasal congestion when I am anywhere near tobacco smoke. I am a lot more sensitive to smoke today as a consequence of my previous treatment and I imagine many other citizens of this province experience similar sensitivities. While I might have felt immune to smoke a number of years ago, today I can smell tobacco smoke while at a considerable distance from the actual smoking site leading me to conclude that a segment of our society is indeed sensitive to and affected by second hand smoke.

If we value our individual health and the health and wellness of our society - regulation of these products by removing them from public spaces and controlling the accessibility of these smoking products to our youth is needed and necessary to sustain our healthy public environments. So, are warning labels required that address the potential harms associated with such products.

While there will be resistance to these proposed amendments to the Smoke-free Places Act and the Tobacco Access Act, we cannot afford to return to where we were prior to 2002. There is emerging evidence to support that e-cigarettes (normalizing of smoking) and water pipes (vapor inhaling) pose serious social concerns and potential health risks. Any argument for the use of e-cigarettes as a cessation tool to smoking can be more prudently argued against by citing its more profound risk of luring people into smoking and the more serious concern of the return to the normalization of smoking behaviors in youth. The lure of the flavored tobacco push must also be regulated if we are seriously planning to curb the smoking addictions within this age group.

In conclusion, I want to state that our Board emphatically supports Bill 60. However, I fear the potential health benefits that could be derived from the enactment of this Bill will be weakened by the exclusion of menthol flavored tobacco products. Our Board, also advocates for immediate adoption of this Bill on acceptance by the government. We do not condone the support of a phase in period.

Thank you for your time.

Daisy J. Dwyer, Chair

Kingston Greenwood Community Health Board

Research paper (Menthol cigarettes and smoking initiation: a tobacco industry perspective) by
Kim Klausner, University of California,

"The documents show that menthol is added to cigarettes in part because it is known to be an attractive feature to inexperienced smokers who perceive menthol cigarettes as less harsh and easier to smoke and because of their availability from friends and family. Second, the tobacco industry found that some youths smoke menthols because they perceive them to be less harmful than non-menthol cigarettes. A key product design issue concerns whether to increase brand menthol levels to appeal to the taste preferences of long-term menthol smokers or keep menthol levels lower to appeal to inexperienced smokers. Marketing studies showed that the companies carefully researched the menthol segment of the market in order to recruit younger smokers to their brands. The industry tracked menthol cigarette usage by age, gender and race to inform product development and marketing decisions".