

April 22, 2015

Office of the Legislative Council
CIBC Building
Suite 802
1809 Barrington Street
P.O. Box 1116
Halifax NS B3J 2X1

Dear Law Amendments Committee:

I'm writing to you on behalf of the College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia (CDHNS) in support of Bill 90, the proposed amendments to Chapter 14 of the *Tobacco Access Act*.

The CDHNS applauds this government for addressing the issue of flavored tobacco products, including menthol, and for wanting to close loopholes that would allow the tobacco industry to exploit our youth. We would also like to praise Minister Glavine for the implementation date of May 31/ 2015, which will make Nova Scotia a leader in tobacco control.

Statistics are showing that a high percentage of youth are choosing flavored tobacco products as their first encounter with tobacco. Experimenting with tobacco products leads to addictions, leading to many health issues. This is very costly to our health care system as well as to the users and their families. Strengthening the *Tobacco Access Act* by banning flavored tobacco products, including menthol, will reduce the number of youth who are seduced by fun, and seemingly harmless, fruit and candy flavored tobacco products and consequently reduce this cost to all.

Oral health care professionals are very aware of the negative effects tobacco products have on the oral cavity. From gum disease to oral cancer, which is one of the deadliest cancers, tobacco products change the state of a person's mouth to make it more susceptible to disease. Tobacco users are very easily identified by their dry, unhealthy mouth. Stains, lesions that won't heal, or worse, oral cancer, are all consequences of tobacco consumption. Oral cancer, which can lead to the loss of the tongue, loss of parts of the face or even loss of life, and was once considered an older person's disease, is increasing among our younger population. The proposed amendments will reduce the number of youth becoming addicted to tobacco products and altering the state of their mouth and their overall health.

The arguments heard from the tobacco industry and its supporters are self-serving and untrue. Protecting people from the tobacco industry is not impinging on their rights. The government has a responsibility to establish strong policies that will promote good health. Just like seatbelts, helmets, speed limits, liquor laws, gun control and so many more regulations, banning any flavors, including menthol, in tobacco products will protect people, especially our youth. As for contraband, research has shown that increasing taxes does not lead to an increase in contraband. The tobacco industry and its supporters would also like to make us believe that banning flavored tobacco product will mean decreased revenue for the province, when in fact, when looking at the long term benefits of a healthier population, this amendment will mean a decrease in health care cost.

CDHNS urges the Nova Scotia government to protect its people, especially our youth, by banning flavored tobacco products, including menthol, and to adhere to the proposed implementation date of May 31-15.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Paulette Hawksworth, RDH
College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia