

Reissued: Tougher tobacco laws protect Alberta's children and youth

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The Redford government is listening to the experts by taking steps to prevent and reduce tobacco use among underage youth and limit children's exposure to second-hand smoke.

The government is planning to support private members legislation, Bill 206, which will prevent the sale of flavoured tobacco products. In addition, the government has introduced a new bill, the Tobacco Reduction Amendment Act, which, if passed, will make it illegal to smoke in a vehicle in which minors are present and ban the use of tobacco-like products (such as waterpipes) in public places.

“Tobacco use has a significant impact on the health of the people of Alberta, and we must work hard to ensure that children and young people are not enticed into picking up this habit. Bill 33 and our support of Bill 206 will help us achieve our goal of limiting the harmful impacts that tobacco has on the wellbeing of our society and our health system.”

- Fred Horne, Minister of Health

“As a dad, I want to do everything I can to keep my kids healthy and give them the best possible start in life. The changes proposed today mean Alberta's children will get to breathe cleaner air. They also further Alberta's position as a leader in tobacco control. The amendments in the Act align with Alberta's Tobacco Reduction Strategy released last year and are part of government's work to implement the strategy and protect the health of Albertans.”

- Dave Rodney, Associate Minister of Wellness

“Recently, waterpipe use has increased and research shows its smoke is at least as harmful as cigarette smoke. Flavoured tobacco products appeal to youth because they mask the harsh taste and smell of tobacco. It's critical that government puts legislation in place to take these gateway products off the market, both to protect the health of Albertans and prevent them from using these harmful products.”

- Dr. James Talbot, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health

The government will proclaim the legislation in stages in order to give Albertans and the province's businesses time to transition to the required changes.

“The legislation tabled today represents a crucial step in protecting our children, youth and the Alberta public from the harmful effects of tobacco. We are very pleased to see the Alberta Government take steps to protect youth, help prevent lung disease and promote lung health so all Albertans can breathe easier.”

- Leigh Allard, President & CEO, The Lung Association, Alberta & NWT

“Alberta youth deserve first-class protection from tobacco sales and marketing. The measures contained in Bills 33 and 206 will help to keep many more adolescents tobacco-free for life.”

- Les Hagen, Executive Director, Action on Smoking & Health

Under the Building Alberta Plan, our government is investing in families and communities, living within our means, and opening new markets for Alberta's resources to ensure we're able to fund the services Albertans told us matter most to them. We will continue to deliver the responsible change Albertans voted for.

BACKGROUND: JUST THE FACTS

According to the 2012 Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, Albertans who smoke or try smoking usually start by age 14. Surveys also show that more than half of students grades six through 12 use flavoured tobacco products.

Tobacco is responsible for about 3,000 deaths in Alberta each year and smoking causes 30 per cent of cancers and 85 per cent of lung cancers, resulting in significant personal and economic costs to the people and health care system of Alberta.

A new research study funded by Health Canada and Alberta Health Services found that the smoke produced when herbal tobacco-free products are burned in a waterpipe may pose a significant threat to the health of both the smoker and those exposed to the smoke. Samples of herbal tobacco-free waterpipe products sold in Alberta were found to contain levels of toxic trace metals and cancer-causing chemicals equivalent to, or in excess of, those found in cigarette tobacco. Air quality tested in several waterpipe cafes where herbal tobacco-free products were smoked also contained unhealthy levels of microparticles, in some cases similar to that experienced by those downwind from a forest fire.

“There is a widespread misconception that these so-called 'herbal' products are somehow a healthy alternative to tobacco. Many people assume because they are flavoured and filtered through water, and do not contain nicotine, that they must be harmless. But this is not the case. The results of our study suggest that herbal tobacco-free waterpipe products, used over the long term, has the potential to produce cancer, cardiovascular and lung disease – just like cigarettes. And for those who already have heart or lung disease, even just one waterpipe session could be dangerous.”

- Dr. Barry Finegan, principal investigator in the waterpipe study, an AHS anesthesiologist and a professor in the U of A's Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry

The amendments tabled today align with the Government of Alberta's Creating Tobacco-free Futures: Alberta's Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use, 2012-2022 announced in November 2012. The strategy outlines a long-range plan to prevent and reduce tobacco use and protect Albertans from the harms of tobacco and second-hand smoke.

Related information

[Creating Tobacco-free Futures: Alberta's Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use](#)

[2012 Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey Results](#)

[Abstract of Health Canada/Alberta Health Services Waterpipe Study](#)

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