



Public Health Services - Northern Zone

April 22, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Dr. Ryan Sommers and I am a family physician in Truro, Nova Scotia and the Regional Medical Officer of Health for the Northern Zone, Nova Scotia Health Authority. I am writing to the Law Amendments committee about the recently introduced legislation that bans all flavored tobacco in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia has a long history of taking the lead in creating legislation that addresses the negative impact of tobacco in our communities. Over 10 years ago, our province was one of the first provincial jurisdictions in Canada to introduce legislation that banned smoking in public places. This was one of the first stepping-stones for the creation of similar policies in other parts of Canada.

Once again, I am extremely proud Nova Scotia has taken the lead on creating an environment that prevents people from smoking and helps them quit their addictive habits by being the first jurisdiction in Canada to ban menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products.

In my clinical practice, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of smoking legislation in Nova Scotia. Fewer youth in my practice are using tobacco products compared to 9 years ago when I started practicing medicine. However, the youth who do smoke are unfortunately using flavored tobacco products such as menthol cigarettes. Recent statistics have found that approximately 1 in 3 teen smokers have smoked menthol cigarettes within the past month. Additional research has shown that youth who smoke menthol tobacco tend to smoke more cigarettes compared to youth who do not.

Flavored tobacco products make smoking "easier" for youth to get addicted and harder for health care professionals to help them quit. Tobacco companies use flavored products to attract new smokers and reduced the harshness of cigarette smoke. This new legislation will allow family physicians to help youth smokers quit tobacco and avoid the negative long-term impacts on their health by eliminating access to these products.

I want to congratulate the Government of Nova Scotia on another historical piece of legislation that will help protect the health of our youth. I fully support this legislation. In particular, I would applaud the proposed implementation date of May 31, 2015. Given the evidence before us, it is prudent of Government to eliminate access to these products as soon as possible.

Please contact me if you have any comments or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Sommers".

Dr. Ryan Sommers, MD CCFP FRPCP(PHPM)

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