

Why We Must Ban Tobacco Displays

Everyone is exposed: smokers and non-smokers, children and adults. Retail promotion is completely inconsistent with the tobacco industry's claim that tobacco promotion only targets adult smokers. In commenting on a tobacco display ban in Ontario, Health Minister George Smitherman asked "Does anyone believe that it is somehow acceptable for cigarettes to be mixed in with Twizzlers and hockey cards for the benefit of young potential customers?"¹

Retail displays encourage impulse purchases including among teenagers, occasional smokers, and ex-smokers struggling to resist cravings and stay smoke-free. The tobacco industry knows the importance of power walls in sparking impulse purchases. Philip Morris distributed a reference guide to their employees stating "there is an ever-increasing trend toward impulse purchases. The large majority of consumers do not really check ads...or plan their purchase decisions. We should have Marlboro (and other PM brands) positioned to take maximum advantage of the impulse shopper." They go on to remind Marlboro reps: "We are after intrusive visibility".²

Retail displays discourage cessation efforts including among smokers trying to quit (55% in New Brunswick, 2004) and quitters trying to remain abstinent. The eye catching tobacco displays are a powerful temptation to someone struggling to resist cravings. Removing retail displays would eliminate another stimulus and support the cessation efforts of New Brunswickers.

Retail displays increase tobacco use.

There is overwhelming evidence that tobacco advertising and promotion, including at point-of-sale, increases overall tobacco consumption, and that a ban on such advertising and promotion would decrease consumption.³ In *RJR-Macdonald v. Canada* (1995), all nine members of the Supreme Court of Canada found that there was a rational connection between a ban on tobacco advertising and reducing tobacco use.

Point-of-sale displays increase tobacco purchases.

In the US, purchases of tobacco increase by as much as 28% with point-of-sale advertising.⁴ Common sense tells us that what works to increase the sale of lottery tickets or chocolate bars, equally works to increase the sale of cigarettes.

Retail displays are a form of promotion.

With restrictions on other types of advertising and promotion, retail displays have become an increasingly crucial part of the tobacco industry's marketing strategy. In 2003, tobacco manufacturers in Canada paid \$88 million to retailers for retail displays; this is up from 77\$ million the previous year. In fact, point-of-sale displays are the fastest growing form of tobacco promotion in the US since 1971.⁵

Powerwalls increase the perceived popularity of cigarettes.

Prominent tobacco displays (powerwalls) in virtually every convenience store, gas station and grocery increase the perception that cigarettes are popular and socially acceptable. Further, research shows that young people who overestimate smoking rates are more likely to become smokers.⁵

Smoking cessation products compete with tobacco at point-of-sale.

Products that assist people to quit smoking, such as nicotine gum, or the patch are displayed at the point-of-sale and must compete with tobacco products for the customers' attention.

¹ George Smitherman, Meeting of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, December 15, 2004. Taken from http://www.ontla.on.ca/hansard/house_debates/38_parl/Session1/L103.htm

² Philip Morris, "Marlboro Medium Reference Guide" May 1991. Bates No. 507795050-507795124. Taken from <http://tobaccodocuments.org/rjr/507795050-5124.html>

³ Canadian Cancer Society, "Compilation of Selected Evidence Regarding the Impact of Tobacco Advertising and Promotion: A Submission to Parliamentarians for Use During Consideration of Bill C-42" December 1998.

⁴ Point of Purchase Advertising Institute, "The point-of-purchase advertising industry fact book" 1992.

⁵ Physicians for a Smoke-free Canada, "Regulatory Options Under the Federal Tobacco Act" December 1997. Taken from http://www.smoke-free.ca/pdf_1/BCRegulationReport.pdf