

February 14, 2011

Professor S Glantz, PHD
Director, UC San Francisco Centre for Tobacco Control
530 Parnassus Avenue Ste 336
San Francisco, CA 94143-1390
USA

In support of Smoke-free Movies:

The facts are these and are indisputable:

- Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death
- An estimated 37,000 Canadians die each year from tobacco-related disease
- Most persons who use tobacco started as teenagers
- Young Canadian adults use tobacco at rates higher than the national average

There is strong empirical evidence that smoking in movies increases adolescent smoking initiation. Analysis of 4 U.S. research studies estimates that as much as 44% of youth smoking can be attributed to exposure to on-screen images of tobacco use: adverse health outcomes are rarely mentioned and misperceptions of prevalence and benefits are common.

In Canada, the majority of films released in 2009 were youth-rated, and 1.117 billion tobacco impressions were delivered via G, PG, and 14A films in theatres. Although most movies in Canada are produced by US companies, the number of youth-rated films with tobacco depictions shown in theatres is higher in Canada because provincial film boards classify more movies rated R in the US, as 14A or PG. Thus, in 2009, 125 of 145 movies with tobacco depiction released in Canadian theatres were youth-rated G, PG or 14A, and delivered more than two thirds of all in-theatre tobacco impressions.

From 2004 to 2009, an estimated \$600 million in provincial and federal film production incentives funded US studio films shot in Canada, mostly in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. An estimated \$240 million of these public incentives funded US studio films with tobacco use – classified as appropriate for children and adolescents by provincial film boards. Every taxpayer dollar funding US studio films that showed smoking cost Canada \$1.70 in tobacco-related medical care and lost productivity.

Because provincial rating agencies seldom apply adult ratings (18A) to top-grossing films rated R in the United States, Canadian children and teens are exposed to 60% (estimated) more tobacco imagery than their US counterparts.

The following changes to provincial film ratings are necessary:

- New movies with smoking receive an R rating – except when tobacco presentation clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use or is necessary to represent smoking by a real historical figure.
- Require producers to certify on-screen that no one involved in the production of the movie received anything of value in consideration for using or displaying tobacco
- Require strong anti-smoking ads to be shown before any movie with tobacco use at the distributor's expense, regardless of the rating and distribution channel
- Require producers to stop identifying tobacco brands
- Require that films with tobacco imagery assigned G, PG, or 14A be ineligible for federal and/or provincial subsidies.

The Lung Association British Columbia is pleased to endorse smoke-free movies and the changes to make it happen.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott McDonald', written in a cursive style.

Scott McDonald, CEO