

ENDORSEMENT OF ACTION ON SMOKING IN MOVIES

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. Leaders in public health units, local boards of health, non-governmental organizations and health charities in Ontario have a history of speaking out in favour of actions to reduce the harmful impact of tobacco use.

Whereas tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disability in Canada, accounting for the deaths of approximately 13,000 people in Ontario alone each year;¹

Whereas the tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use and particular brands on-screen, while obscuring its true purpose in doing so;²

Whereas adolescents watch more films than any other age group: movie-going is a universal experience and tobacco imagery in films is currently unavoidable;³

Whereas nearly 90 percent of tobacco impressions delivered to theatre audiences in Canada in 2009 were delivered by large US media conglomerates;³

Whereas Canadian movie rating systems classify more movies as 14A or PG that are rated R in the US resulting in 60% more tobacco imagery exposure by youth-rated films;³

Whereas exposure to smoking in movies is estimated to be responsible for 44% of youth uptake;⁴

Whereas an estimated 130,000 Canadian smokers aged 15-19 have been recruited to smoke by exposure to on-screen smoking, and 43,000 of them will eventually die of tobacco-caused diseases;³

Whereas the World Health Organization has advised all nations that have ratified the *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control*, a global treaty obligating Parties including Canada to prevent youth smoking and end tobacco promotion through all channels, to give an adult rating to all new films that depict smoking, whether domestically produced or imported;⁵

Therefore be it resolved that Ontario Lung Association (name of organization) endorses the following policies to reduce the exposure of youth to smoking in movies:

- (1) Rate new movies with smoking "18A" in Ontario, with the sole exceptions being when the tobacco presentation clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use or is necessary to represent smoking of a real historical figure.
- (2) 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.
- (3) Require strong anti-smoking ads to be shown before any movie with tobacco use at the distributor's expense, regardless of rating and distribution channel.
- (4) Require producers to stop identifying tobacco brands.
- (5) Require that films with tobacco imagery assigned a G, PG, or 14A rating be ineligible for federal and provincial film subsidies.

Signed _____

Date _____

01/03/11

¹ <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/default.asp> Accessed August 17 2010

² C Mekemson and SA Glantz, "How the tobacco industry built its relationship with Hollywood." *Tobacco Control* 2002; 11: i81-i91. KL Lum, JR Polansky, RK Jackler, et al., *Tobacco Control* 2008; 17: 313-323.

³ Polansky, J. Tobacco Vector: How American movies, Canadian film subsidies and provincial rating practices will kill 43,000 Canadian teen alive today- and what Canadian government can do about it. Physicians for Smoke-Free Canada. July 2010. Accessed August 2010 www.smoke-free.ca/pdf/1/2010/Tobaccovector.pdf

⁴ C Millett and SA Glantz, "Assigning an '18' rating to movies with tobacco imagery is essential to reduce youth smoking (editorial)," *Thorax* 2010, 65(5): 377-78

⁵ World Health Organization, *Smoke-free movies: From evidence to action*, 2009 Accessed April 2010 http://www.who.int/tobacco/smoke_free_movies/en/

ONTARIO COALITION FOR SMOKE-FREE MOVIES

September 1, 2010

Dear colleague,

Re: Act now to reduce the impact of smoking in movies on youth in Ontario

As you are aware, tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. The 2008 review of tobacco and media by the US National Cancer Institute (*Monograph 19*) reached an unequivocal conclusion regarding the impact of smoking in movies on youth tobacco use: "The total weight of evidence from cross-sectional, longitudinal and experimental studies indicates a causal relationship between exposure to smoking in movies and youth smoking initiation."

Researchers estimate that 44% of youth smoking can be attributed to exposure to on-screen smoking. The influence of movie smoking on young people should not be surprising, given the pervasive influence of Hollywood on popular culture and the fact that most other vehicles of tobacco promotion have been banned in Canada.

The tobacco industry's collaboration with Hollywood, including paid product placement, is well documented. The tobacco industry's own files reveal the importance of movies to tobacco promotion: "Film is better than any commercial that has been run on television or in any magazine, because the audience is totally unaware of any sponsor involvement."

The World Health Organization recommends four solutions to reduce tobacco depictions in movies. The recent report *Tobacco Vector*, commissioned by Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, examines the importance of applying these policy solutions in Canada, as well as the role of public funding and film subsidies for youth-rated films with tobacco depictions.

Smoking in movies undermines our collective tobacco control efforts. We encourage you to support the policy actions needed to reduce the impact of smoking in movies on youth initiation and subsequent long-term addiction to tobacco industry products. Please submit a letter of endorsement to the Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies to John Atkinson at jatkinson@on.lung.ca. Endorsements are being compiled online by the Ontario Lung Association's Youth Advocacy Training Institute at www.smokefreemovies.ca.

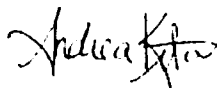
A sample statement of endorsement is enclosed for your consideration and signature along with a summary of the evidence with references in the fact sheet *Smoking in the Movies*.

Sincerely,



Lorraine Fry
lfry@nsra-adnf.ca

Co-chairs, Ontario Coalition for Smoke-Free Movies



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