



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health and CEO

DATE: 2018 October 18

SUPPORT FOR PLAIN AND STANDARDIZED TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND PACKAGING

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 062-18 re: “Support for Plain and Standardized Tobacco Products and Packaging.”

Key Points

- In November 2015, the Government of Canada introduced plain and standardized tobacco products and packaging legislation (“plain packaging”, a key priority to strengthen current tobacco control measures across the country.
- Plain packaging will result in the removal of all tobacco product design features, such as colours, fonts, and logos, which reinforce the tobacco brand and undermine the graphic health warnings on the package.
- In May 2016, the Middlesex-London Health Unit Board of Health signed the *Plain and Standardized Packaging Endorsement Form* to recommend that the Government of Canada implement plain and standardized tobacco packaging.
- In September 2018, MLHU submitted a letter to a Health Canada consultation in support of plain packaging, and providing feedback on the federal government’s proposed *Tobacco Products Regulations (Plain and Standard Appearance)*.

Background

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of illness and premature death in Canada, killing more than forty-five thousand Canadians annually. Preventing initiation of tobacco use is one of the most effective means of reducing tobacco use and its associated health risks.

The tobacco industry understands the value of their packaging, and designs them for making their products attractive and appealing to youth. Colourful and eye-catching logos and sleek, sculpted packages reinforce the brand to tobacco users. These undermine graphic health warnings that are already required on packages.

Plain packaging was first initiated in Australia in 2012. Since then, eight countries have adopted plain packaging measures, and at least sixteen more are in the process of, or considering implementing, plain packaging for tobacco products.

There is an extensive body of evidence in support of implementing plain packaging, and additional studies have further documented the Australian experience. Evidence shows that plain packaging reduces the appeal of tobacco products, and reduces the prevalence of smoking. After plain packaging was introduced in Australia, a significant decline in smoking prevalence and an increase in call-to-quit lines was observed.

In Canada in 2015, the federal government committed to implementing plain packaging, and recognized it as a top priority in order to strengthen tobacco control measures across Canada and protect youth and others from being exposed and targeted via appealing tobacco packages.

Health Canada 2018 Consultation

In June 2018, the Government of Canada released its proposed regulations for plain and standardized products, including measures to standardize the appearance of tobacco product packs, as well as the product itself. This includes removing brand colours, logos, and other distinctive or appealing features associated with the tobacco brand. All packs and products would have a similar appearance, and the same ordinary, bland colour. Standardizing the product, as well as the packaging, goes above and beyond plain packaging efforts in other countries, and positions Canada as a leader in tobacco control.

In September 2018, the Middlesex-London Health Unit participated in a public consultation by writing a letter in support of plain packaging, and providing feedback on the Canadian Government's proposed *Tobacco Products Regulations (Plain and Standard Appearance)*. The letter to the Tobacco Control Directorate, Health Canada, titled "Support for Plain and Standardized Tobacco Products and Packaging," is included in [Appendix A](#).

This report was prepared by the Healthy Living Division.



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