

Alberta Recreation and Parks Association

POSITION PAPER ON TOBACCO REDUCTION

DRAFT
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POLICY RATIONALE

The use of tobacco is the leading preventable cause of illness and premature death in Alberta. Each year, over 3400 Albertans die as a result of tobacco-related diseases. Smokers are at risk of developing several types of cancer, emphysema, strokes, heart attacks and other cardiovascular diseases. As well, exposure to second-hand smoke puts additional citizens at risk of developing tobacco-related illness. Smoking harms the health of smokers and those around them.

Despite the fact that the negative health effects of tobacco use are widely known, nearly one-third of adult Albertans smoke. Reducing the use of tobacco products will require a coordinated effort, on a variety of fronts, to make purchasing and using tobacco more difficult and less socially acceptable.

As an organization which advocates for active lifestyles and healthy communities, the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) has a role to play in supporting efforts to improve the quality of life of all Albertans, through reducing the use of tobacco products. As facility managers, program coordinators and key decision-makers, the members of ARPA can influence some of the choices available to children, youth and adults in the province. Supporting initiatives to reduce tobacco use fits in well with the association's Mission to:

"...unite province-wide advocates of recreation and parks into a proactive, effective force for building healthy citizens, their communities and their environments in Alberta."

BACKGROUND

Tobacco smoke contains more than 4000 chemicals, more than 50 of which cause cancer. Examples include nicotine, tar, carbon monoxide, vinyl chloride, formaldehyde, ammonia, lead and arsenic. Individually, these substances can harm health, and taken together in tobacco smoke they are even more dangerous. Tobacco costs Albertans \$215,000,000 each year, or \$77 per capita for direct health care costs.

In addition to smell and irritation to the eyes, exposure to second-hand smoke or environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) can cause increased risks of developing lung cancer and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. This is especially dangerous for children, as they breathe faster than adults and their bodies are still developing. Children exposed to ETS are at greater risk of developing colds, coughs, earaches, asthma, tonsillitis, bronchitis and pneumonia.

Smoking results in both direct and indirect costs to employers and workplaces, including:

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- More employee absenteeism
- Decreased productivity
- Higher health care costs
- Higher maintenance and cleaning costs
- Increased insurance costs
- Greater risk of fire and other damage

There are also risks associated with the use of “chew tobacco”, which has been linked to mouth and throat cancers.

CURRENT STATUS

As concern around the issue of tobacco use has grown, a number of different organizations have been created, while others have come forward to take a position on tobacco reduction. For example:

- The Alberta Campaign for Action on Tobacco (ACAT) is a coalition of health-related organizations, which is urging the Alberta Government to pass legislation that will protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke and will protect children from tobacco industry marketing.
- Action on Smoking Health (ASH) is a Western Canadian advocacy group, based in Edmonton, devoted to tobacco use control and prevention.
- The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) has recently adopted a resolution (No.A-10) which requests that the Government of Alberta introduce standards to regulate smoking in public places and to protect Albertans from second hand smoke.

The most comprehensive effort in this regard (in Alberta) has been the “Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy”, launched in March 2002 by the Honourable Gary Mar, Minister of Health and Wellness.

The “Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy” has been developed to address the issue in a comprehensive, complementary, collaborative and sustainable manner. Primary responsibility for the implementation of the strategy has been given to the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC), which received significant financial support (\$11.7 million) to operationalize the strategy.

The strategy is made up of five elements:

- Leadership and Coordination
- Prevention and Education
- Reduction and Cessation
- Research and Evaluation
- Taxation and Legislation

Programs have been developed to target school age children, young adults, and individuals wishing to stop smoking. Twenty-three tobacco reduction counselors have been hired throughout the province, a smoker’s help line has been established, and a website has been created (www.corp.aadac.com/tobacco).

The purpose of the strategy is to “ increase the wellness of Albertans and to decrease health care costs through the denormalization of the use of tobacco, by

- Reducing the number of young people starting to use tobacco

- Encouraging and helping tobacco users to quit
- Reducing nonsmokers' exposure to environmental (second-hand) tobacco smoke.”

The first and third points listed above are particularly relevant for ARPA. While the association can recognize the rights of Albertans to make choices about their own leisure pursuits, there must also be concern for those who are inadvertently exposed to second hand smoke, and for children and youth who may be influenced in their choices around appropriate leisure time activities.

LINKAGES TO ARPA

In its Strategic Business Plan for 2002-2004, the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association outlines its commitment to improving the quality of life for Albertans. The Plan very much reflects the need for an allied network of recreation, health promotion, quality of life and environmental advocates, working in partnership to achieve common goals. In terms of the “Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy”, this fits well with the stated principle of “Collaboration” which recommends that: “Provincial, municipal and community agencies need to work together to address tobacco reduction to ensure mutual knowledge and support.”

Specifically, the Association envisages a recreation and parks industry that “makes a positive contribution towards ameliorating emergent social, economic and environmental conditions within the province”, and “has safe, high quality public and private sector natural and built environments in which people enjoy benefits from recreation and parks participation.” The Alberta Recreation and Parks Association can influence the quality of recreational environments in the province by encouraging its membership to promote and support smoke-free events, activities, and facilities. ARPA also has a role to play in promoting safe and healthy workplaces for those who are employed in the recreation and parks field. The Association can work in collaboration with other organizations aiming to achieve the goal of reducing tobacco use (including both cigarettes and chew tobacco).

STATEMENTS OF PRINCIPLE

1. ARPA supports the goal of the “Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy” to denormalize the use of tobacco by
 - Reducing the number of young people starting to use tobacco, and
 - Reducing nonsmokers' exposure to environmental (second-hand) tobacco smoke.

As an association dedicated to promoting healthy active lifestyles for Albertans, ARPA should be a part of the team of organizations and advocates helping to implement the strategy. Making tobacco use less socially acceptable will take a coordinated effort from many sectors of the population.
2. ARPA believes in the right of nonsmoking Albertans to participate in recreational activities without exposure to second-hand smoke.

Participating in recreational activities involves being able to make choices. Those individuals who use tobacco products have a right to choose their own leisure pursuits, however they do not have a right to put the health of others at risk. ARPA should be supporting the rights of non-smokers, especially children, to engage in recreational activities in a smoke-free setting.
3. ARPA believes that children and youth should be encouraged to make choices that will involve them in safe, healthy, recreational activities as an alternative to tobacco-related activities.

The provision of safe, healthy recreational activities, whether through programs or facilities, should be a priority for recreation professionals. ARPA members can make important contributions to promoting active, tobacco-free lifestyles as a socially accepted and valued choice.

4. ARPA should be a leader in advocating for the reduction of tobacco use in leisure and recreation facilities, programs and services.

The Association should be setting an example for other service providers in the industry.

5. ARPA supports provincial legislation to regulate tobacco use, sales and advertising.
As part of a multi-sector approach to reducing tobacco use, targeted provincial legislation will ensure that the tobacco industry is complying with recommendations.
6. ARPA does not support the use of tobacco revenue for recreation programs or services.
It would be inappropriate for the association to accept revenue from the sale of a product which increases health risks for participants.
7. ARPA does not support the sale or advertising of tobacco products in recreation facilities.
As part of making tobacco use less socially acceptable, access to the products and promotion of their use should be eliminated in places where children and other non-smokers may be exposed.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. ARPA will promote the message of the “Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy” (with regard to reducing exposure to second-hand smoke and preventing children and youth from starting to use tobacco) through the Association website and newsletter.
2. ARPA will support the initiatives of the “Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy” by encouraging recreation facilities to become “no-smoking” environments, for both patrons and employees.
3. ARPA will advocate for the provision of recreational opportunities for children and youth in smoke-free settings.
4. Where there is an option to do so, ARPA will support businesses and facilities that are smoke-free.
5. ARPA will encourage its membership to model healthy lifestyle choices, including reducing the use of tobacco.
6. ARPA will not accept tobacco-related advertising in its publications, including schedules, newsletters, brochures, or other documents.
7. ARPA will not knowingly accept sponsorship, whether cash, product, or in-kind donation, from tobacco producers.

REFERENCES

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2. *ATRS Update- Newsletter of the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy*, AADAC, 2003
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4. *Denormalization*, National Clearing House on Tobacco and Health, www.ncth.ca, 2003
5. *Progress Report on the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy*, Government of Alberta, 2002 (available from the AADAC website www.corp.aadac.com/tobacco)
6. *Smoke-free workplaces at a glance*, World Bank Health, Nutrition, and Population web site: www.worldbank.org/hnp 2002
7. *Strategic Business Plan 2002-2004*, Alberta Recreation and Parks Association
8. *The Costs of Substance Abuse in Canada*, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 1996