

Non-smokers' Health Act

Researchers are now discovering that nicotine changes the very structure and function of the brain. I quote now from the *U.S. Congressional Quarterly* editorial research report of March 24, 1989: "Nicotine controls the release of hormones from the pituitary gland in the brain and from the adrenal gland in the body. It stimulates adrenalin, which may produce the same symptoms as physical and psychological stress. Nicotine also stimulates the release of dopamine and noradrenalin, which may produce feelings of pleasure. Autopsies have found that heavy smokers develop additional nicotine receptors, sites on the surface of brain cells that provide entry points for nicotine.

These changes in the brain, if permanent, might explain why some smokers say they never regain their abilities of mental concentration years after quitting. Another possibility is that such smokers are suffering some form of long term withdrawal.

What is also important to note is that the earlier one starts smoking, the longer one will smoke. Thus it is important to stop smoking before it starts with the young people.

According to a survey conducted by the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse, over 25 per cent of the high school seniors who ever smoked had their first cigarette by Grade 6, over 57 per cent had their first cigarette by Grade 8 and 94 per cent had their first cigarette by Grade 11.

According to the same survey, the highest rates of initiation into daily smoking are among children who are 12 to 14 years of age.

Cigarette smoking is the future No. 1 killer of today's teenagers. According to an article in *The Journal of School Health* every day more than 2,000 American adolescents smoke their first cigarette and a proportionate number of Canadian adolescents equally do the same.

Over the lifetimes of these children, a significant number will die.

Twenty-five per cent of the teenagers who start smoking today will eventually die from diseases caused by this addiction.

This Government must accept the responsibility for supporting programs that will prevent our children from becoming addicted to nicotine and being lifetime smokers.

This is the Government's responsibility because smoking does not just pose health hazards to smokers themselves, it also puts non-smokers at risk because of the negative effects of secondhand smoke. Therefore, smoking is not just a personal health problem, it is also a social public health problem.

As a social public health problem, and in the interest of the common good, there are grounds for the Government to intervene to try to protect non-smokers from the ill effects of cigarette smoke.

Research has shown that the spouses and children of smokers have increased risk of serious health problems. One study found that children whose parents smoke have much higher rates of respiratory illness such as colds, influenza, and pneumonia and reduced lung capacity.

Of particular importance to the Bill we are now debating is the following statistics reported by the Canadian Health and Welfare study. A non-smoker who is exposed to secondhand smoke in the workplace for 20 years suffers the same negative effects as someone who has smoked 10 cigarettes a day for 20 years.

This is not only totally unfair to non-smokers, it is almost criminal. As a medical doctor, I am appalled that this Government has stalled so long before introducing amendments to a Bill which is so obviously vital to the welfare of Canadians.

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There are also adverse economic effects of cigarette smoking. It is society that pays when a person is ill, is absent from work, or dies young and leaves dependants. Depending on the country, the direct health cost of dealing with smoking-related illness varies from 3 per cent to 5 per cent of all health care costs.

Health and Welfare Canada has estimated that the cost associated with smoking is twice as high as the revenue from tobacco taxation. The Health and Welfare study found that the economic costs of tobacco use in terms of mortality, disability, fire damage, direct hospitalization and physicians' fees is over \$7 billion compared