



# ONTARIO COALITION FOR SMOKE FREE MOVIES

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Dear Colleague,

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

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario.<sup>1</sup> A significant amount of research examining the prevalence of smoking in movies and its impact on youth smoking has shown a causal relationship between exposure to smoking in movies and youth starting to smoke.<sup>2</sup>

The history of the tobacco industry's collaboration in Hollywood to promote smoking in movies, including payment for the placement of tobacco products in movies, is well documented. According to the tobacco industry, "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."<sup>3</sup>

Today, tobacco use in films remains widespread. In Ontario, between 2002-2018, 87% of top-grossing movies containing tobacco were youth-rated, much higher than in the US (53%).<sup>2</sup>

The influence of smoking in movies 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, especially in Canada.

The World Health Organization recommends five solutions to reduce tobacco depictions in movies. The 2010 report *Tobacco Vector*, commissioned by Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, examines the importance of applying these policy solutions in Canada. This includes ineligibility for government funding for youth-rated films that depict tobacco.

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 **Attn: Donna Kosmack** at [donna.kosmack@mlhu.on.ca](mailto:donna.kosmack@mlhu.on.ca) Endorsements are compiled online at <http://smokefreemovies.ca/letters-of-support/>.

A sample statement of endorsement is enclosed for your consideration for signature.

Sincerely,

Donna Kosmack  
[donna.kosmack@mlhu.on.ca](mailto:donna.kosmack@mlhu.on.ca)

Andrea Kita  
[andrea.kita@hamilton.ca](mailto:andrea.kita@hamilton.ca)



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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 alone in Ontario each year;<sup>1</sup>

**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;<sup>5</sup>

**Whereas** adolescents watch more films than any other age group: movie-going is a universal experience and tobacco imagery in films is currently unavoidable;<sup>4</sup>

**Whereas** top-grossing movies between 2002-2018 contained nearly 46,000 tobacco incidents and 86% of tobacco incidents were found in movies rated for youth in ON;<sup>2</sup>

**Whereas** the Ontario movie rating system classifies more movies as 14A or PG that are rated R in the US resulting in Ontario youth having unrestricted access to 65% more movies with smoking than youth in the US;<sup>2</sup>

**Whereas** exposure to smoking in movies is estimated to be responsible for 44% of youth uptake;<sup>6</sup>

**Whereas** at least 185,000 Ontario youth will be recruited to cigarette smoking by their exposure to on-screen smoking; and at least 59,000 of them will eventually die from smoking-related diseases;<sup>2</sup>

**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;<sup>7</sup>

**Therefore, be it resolved that \_\_\_\_\_ endorses the following policies to reduce the exposure of youth to smoking in movies:**

- 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.
- 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 ant-smoking ads to be shown before any movie with tobacco use at the distributor’s expense, regardless of rating and distribution channel.
- Require Producers to stop identifying tobacco brands.
- Require that films with tobacco imagery assigned a G, PG, or 14A rating be ineligible for federal and provincial film subsidies.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/default.asp> Accessed July 2018



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<sup>2</sup> The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU): Youth Exposure to Tobacco in Movies in ON, Canada 2002-2018. Rashmi Narkar, Shawn O'Connor, Robert Schwartz

<sup>3</sup> <https://smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu/history/after-1970> Accessed July 2018

<sup>4</sup> Polansky, J. "Tobacco Vector: How American movies, Canadian film subsidies and provincial rating practices will kill 43,000 Canadian teens alive today- and what

Canadian governments can do about it." Physicians for Smoke-Free Canada. Accessed July 2018

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[http://www.smoke-free.ca/pdf\\_1/2010/Tobaccovector.pdf](http://www.smoke-free.ca/pdf_1/2010/Tobaccovector.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> C. Mekemson and S.A. Glantz, "How the tobacco industry built its relationship with Hollywood," *Tobacco Control* 2002; 11: i81-i91. K.L. Lum, J.R Polansky,

R.K. Jackler, et al., *Tobacco Control* 2008; 17: 313-323

<sup>6</sup> C. Millett and S.A. Glantz, "Assigning an '18' rating to movies with tobacco imagery is essential to reduce youth smoking (editorial)," *Thorax* 2010; 65(5):377-78

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization, *Smoke-free movies: From evidence to action*, 2009. [http://www.who.int/tobacco/smoke\\_free\\_movies/en/](http://www.who.int/tobacco/smoke_free_movies/en/) Accessed July 2018