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Nunavut

Minister of Health's 2025/26 *Tobacco and Smoking Act* Annual Report

INTRODUCTION

As legislated within Nunavut's *Tobacco and Smoking Act* (*TSA*), the Minister of Health (Minister) is required to prepare an annual report on the operation of the Act. The Department of Health (Health) is responsible for administering the *TSA* since its enactment on May 31, 2023, when it replaced the *Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Places Act.*

The *TSA* Annual Report provides an overview of Health's efforts in enforcing and monitoring compliance with the *TSA*, including insights on the Tobacco and Cannabis Program's (TCP) work, implementation strengths, challenges and areas for future work. This report covers the period from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, and will be used to inform the ongoing implementation of the *TSA*.

HEALTH'S TOBACCO AND CANNABIS PROGRAM AND TOBACCO CONTROL IN NUNAVUT

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of disease and death in Canada. Despite significant progress nationally, Nunavut continues to experience disproportionately high rates of tobacco use, with smoking prevalence consistently reported as the highest in the country. In 2024, the average smoking rate across the provinces was 11.1% for individuals aged 18 and older.[1] In Nunavut, available evidence indicates that in 2024, 63.1% of individuals aged 18 and older reported current smoking[2], representing a 6.9% decrease from the rate reported in 2018.[3] Despite this decline, smoking prevalence in the territory remains more than five times higher than the national average.

[1] *Statistics Canada, August 6, 2025, "Overview of Historical Trends."* The 2024 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) does not include the territories when referring to national averages.
[2] For the territories, CCHS two-year period estimates are available, with the most recent period being 2023/24.
[3] The 2018 statistics were derived from a different survey, the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) survey. These results are not directly comparable due to differences in methodology. While CCHS measures smoking prevalence across Canada, including Nunavut, the LQAS methodology may provide a more representative estimate of smoking prevalence in Nunavut's context: LQAS surveys Nunavummiut in person and in their preferred language, while CCHS does so over the phone in English or French.

With respect to vaping, territory-specific vaping prevalence estimates for Nunavut remain limited. However, national surveillance data indicate continued high rates of nicotine vaping among youth and young adults across Canada. [4] Given Nunavut's historically high rates of tobacco use, ongoing monitoring and targeted prevention and education efforts related to vaping remain an important public health priority.

Similarly, while cannabis smoking decreased nationally in 2024, it remained the most common method of cannabis consumption among Canadians aged 16 and older who reported using cannabis for non-medical purposes.[5] The most recent territorial research available conducted in 2023 found that approximately 46% of Nunavummiut aged 16 years and older reported consuming cannabis for non-medical purposes in the past 12 months.[6]

The high rate of smoking in Nunavut, especially among youth, remains a concern. Health, through the TCP, continues to implement tobacco control and harm reduction initiatives aimed at reducing the health impacts associated with tobacco, vaping, and cannabis use. The TCP, in collaboration with environmental health officers (EHOs), also supports regulatory compliance and enforcement activities by monitoring tobacco retailers.

The TCP's work is guided by four overarching goals:

1. **Prevention**: Encouraging Nunavummiut to never start using tobacco, vapour products[7], and cannabis.
2. **Protection**: Protecting Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke.

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[4] *Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey (CTNS), 2025*. The CTNS is a national health survey conducted by Health Canada and Statistics Canada. It measures the prevalence of tobacco, vaping, and cannabis, alcohol use among Canadians aged 15 and older. The target population for CTNS is non-institutionalized persons, living in Canada's ten provinces.

[5] *Canadian Cannabis Survey (CCS) on non-medical use of cannabis in Canada, 2024.*

[6] *The Cannabis Policy Study in the Territories-Nunavut 2023 Report, 2024.*This research study is conducted by the University of Waterloo and designed to examine trends in cannabis use and policy, including legalization of medical and non-medical cannabis. It is a repeat cross-sectional survey conducted annually in the three Canadian territories.

[7] The term "*vapour products"* is aligned with the terminology used in the *TSA*. It is more formal and inclusive of the different types of E-Nicotine Delivery Systems. However, "*vape*" is more commonly and colloquially used. The two terms are used interchangeably throughout this report.

3. **De-normalization**: Influencing attitudes around tobacco, vaping and cannabis use so that it is no longer considered the norm in Nunavut society.
4. **Cessation/Harm Reduction**: Encouraging and helping Nunavummiut who want to reduce or quit tobacco, vaping, and cannabis.

These four goals are supported by six specific areas for action, which are:

1. **Training and Capacity Building**: Health care providers (HCPs), wellness workers, and others are trained in tobacco cessation and cannabis harm reduction and outreach techniques.
2. **Partnerships and Outreach**: Organizations outside of the Government of Nunavut (GN) who host programming for Nunavummiut are supported with funding and resources to incorporate tobacco cessation and cannabis harm reduction messaging.
3. **Policy and Enforcement**: TCP contributes to updating tobacco and cannabis related legislation and taxation, in addition to overseeing the Tobacco Education and Compliance Program for retailers in the territory. Enforcement requires collaboration with other Health teams and GN departments.
4. **Mass Media**: Print, video, radio, online, and social media messaging are used to disseminate information across the territory.
5. **Knowledge Translation and Resource Development**: Nunavut specific resources are developed for various stakeholders and reviewed regularly.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Data is collected and analyzed to track program progress.

NUNAVUT'S *TOBACCO AND SMOKING ACT* (*TSA*)

The *TSA* is the key component of the Nunavut tobacco reduction strategy that outlines the regulations governing the use, sale, and monitoring of tobacco, vapour products, and cannabis in Nunavut. It acknowledges the inherent harmfulness of tobacco and smoking products and defines the consequences for those who fail to comply with its regulations, including individuals and corporations, as well as retailers. The *TSA* reflects best practices in tobacco and smoking products control and aligns with the territory's broader tobacco and smoking reduction strategy.

Oversight and administration of the *TSA* also involve other divisions within Health as well as collaboration with the Department of Finance (Finance). Within Health, the *TSA* is administered by the Population Health Division. Environmental Health Services (EHO), within the Health Protection Division, conducts tobacco and smoking products inspections. Tobacco retail dealer and wholesaler permits are issued by the Taxation and Insurance Division within Finance. Finance is also responsible for the retail licensing and regulation of all cannabis products, including smoked cannabis. There is however no territorial licensing for the sale of vapour products since Nunavut has joined the national vaping tax regime. Additionally, herbal shisha products are not taxed and are therefore not subject to tracking.

The *TSA* introduced several changes that received strong support from Nunavummiut during community and stakeholder consultations conducted throughout the development of the Act. For more information on the *TSA* and the changes it brought, consult the 2024/25 *TSA* Annual Report.

Implementation of the *TSA*

In 2025/26, the TCP team continued implementing the *TSA* Implementation Plan with support from an external contractor providing project management service. The implementation strategy mobilizes five levers of intervention attached to the priority areas of the Program's overarching goals of tobacco control in Nunavut. These levers are as follows and have been broken down into 19 actions, which are attached to 86 activities to be accomplished by 2025/26: [8]

1. **Roll out a Sustainable Tobacco Communication Strategy**: in support of the *TSA*'s number one goal to protect Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke.
2. **De-normalize Tobacco use and Make it Less Attractive in Nunavut**: in support of preventing minors from accessing and using tobacco and smoking products.
3. **Encourage and Support Smokers in their Efforts to Quit**: in support of the *TSA*'s goal to reduce the visibility of tobacco and smoking products.
4. **Improve Access to Treatment and Care**: in support of the goal to reduce the usage of tobacco and smoking products, Health provides nicotine replacement

[8] A final implementation report is underway and will provide a comprehensive assessment of implementation progress.

products, available in the local health centres or pharmacies, at no cost to those who are on their journey to reduce or quit tobacco and vaping.

5. **Monitor, Evaluate, Research, and Disseminate Knowledge about Tobacco**: to operationalize a database and a progressive enforcement program to strengthen implementation and compliance activities.

Implementation progress as of March 31, 2026:

- Health has carried out a range of informational and awareness-raising activities to publicize the new legislative measures. These activities have reached both the public and specific target audiences, including tobacco retailers and proprietors of smoke-free premises covered by the *TSA*. Communications have included public service announcements, letters, memos, and social media posts.
- Health has maintained an ongoing tobacco communication strategy tailored to specific audiences, including updates to the Nunavut Quits website and social media platforms to incorporate new resources, cessation messaging, vaping and cannabis information, and educational content related to the health impact of smoking and the provisions of the *TSA*.
- Health has launched a mass media campaign to help inform Nunavummiut on the *TSA* on May 31st, 2025, in recognition of World No Tobacco Day.
- Health has supported the Nunavut Housing Corporation in implementing the smoke-free publicly funded and GN staff housing initiative. Information cards (K-cards) and magnets were distributed to educate residents and tenants on new smoking restrictions, buffer zones, and available cessation supports. Signage designated for smoke-free housing was distributed throughout the territory to landlords to be affixed on housing buildings.
- Health has conducted ongoing awareness initiatives related to smoke-free public spaces and territorial environmental health messaging, including promotion of the “nine-metre buffer zone” and smoke-free places rules under the *TSA*.
- The updated Tobacco and Smoking Product Retailer Toolkit was distributed to all registered tobacco and smoking product retailers. Four retailer reporting forms were developed to assist retailers in complying with the new *TSA*.
- Health has developed a retailer outreach plan aimed at increasing retailer education and engagement regarding the updated retailer toolkit and reporting requirements. The rollout activity plan is currently under development, and its implementation is expected to proceed once finalized.

- Health has collaborated with Finance to develop new and effective procedures intended to strengthen and streamline enforcement of the *TSA*.
- At the request of Health, the City of Iqaluit amended the Cannabis Consumption Tobacco Use and Vaping By-Law No. 863 by repealing and striking out subsections 5.03 and 5.04. These subsections were sending a contradictory message with subsection 19.1 of the *TSA*. Mainly, sections 5.03 and 5.04 gave individuals the option to use an e-cigarette to sample a product (in a vape shop), while subsection 19(1)(f) of the *TSA* states that no activity occurs at a tobacconist, vape shop, or shisha shop other than the sale of products and their display, advertising, and promotion (i.e., a retailer shall ensure that no smoking occurs at the shop).
- Health has partnered with the Ottawa Heart Institute to implement the Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation (OMSC) to support clients undergoing treatment to also have access to cessation interventions as part of routine care. Work continued toward establishing implementation committees, standardizing prescribing practice, including the development of order sets and clinical guidance to ensure consistency across providers throughout the territory.
- Health has collaborated with Health Canada and a contractor to provide enhanced Quitline services, including a 24/7 helpline to support Nunavummiut seeking assistance to quit or reduce smoking and vaping. Web chat and text messaging options are now included in the service, offering Nunavummiut direct access to a Quit coach providing tailored guidance, encouragement, and resources for cessation products.
- Health has designed a mass media campaign focused on raising awareness of the health risks associated with cannabis use. The campaign is expected to launch in fiscal year 2026/27.
- Health strengthened public messaging regarding smoking in vehicles when minors are present by developing targeted educational resources, integrating messaging into media campaigns, and maintaining ongoing public awareness activities.
- Health continued collaboration and outreach activities with sports and recreation stakeholders to promote positive role-modeling behaviours and healthy lifestyle choices among youth and community members.

- Health provided nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products during education and outreach activities in Iqaluit and community visits at no cost to individuals seeking to reduce or quit tobacco use. Medical travellers and escorts at Larga Baffin in Ottawa also have access to cessation supports, including NRT. The program has been offered since 2019 with a brief pause in 2020 due to the pandemic.

As demonstrated in the following sections, through its compliance promotion, monitoring, and enforcement activities between April 2025 and March 2026, Health has been working to educate Nunavummiut and other stakeholders on the requirements of the *TSA*.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Social Media

Over the reporting period, the GN *Tobacco Has No Place Here Facebook* page was officially renamed *Nunavut Quits* to align with the updated program branding. Throughout the year, the page delivered targeted content focused on the current smoking laws and available cessation supports for those wanting to quit or reduce smoking, vaping, or cannabis use, as well as educational content on the health risks associated with tobacco and smoking products. An emphasis was placed on making the content on the Facebook page more interactive with surveys, quit-buddy prompts, and TCP seasonal quit challenges. These initiatives aimed to encourage audience participation, support behaviour change in cutting down or making a quit attempt, as well as to increase engagement through comments.

Facebook performance between April 2025 and March 2026:

- *The Nunavut Quits* Facebook page held a total of 5,816 followers. This reflects the page's audience size, the number of individuals who saw any content connected to the page and can receive its content including posts, ads, page visits, mentions, and shares by others.
- Posting activity increased significantly, with 419 posts published compared to 294 in the previous fiscal year, representing an increase of approximately 42.5%.

- Page activity demonstrated strong reach and visibility:
  - 533,460 people reached across all page content (including posts, ads, page visits, mentions and shared).
  - 369,055 impressions[9] were generated from scheduled posts content, indicating the number of times content was displayed.
  - 152,053 people reached through published posts, representing unique users who viewed post content.
- Post engagement more than doubled, increasing from 1,084 engagements in the previous year to 3,180 engagements this year, representing a 193% increase.
- Engagement trends indicate that audience interaction peaked during key campaign periods, particularly in November 2025 driven by the Quit Challenge campaign, and April 2025, with the April 7 World Health Day post "*Seal the deal on good health! Quit Smoking today!*" and the November 3 Cravings post among the top performing content.
- Overall, seasonal campaigns contributed to increased engagement, with higher levels of reactions, comments, and shares observed during campaign periods. Notably, the November Quit Challenge series and December survey campaign generated the highest levels of audience interaction, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted, time-bound health promotion initiatives.

Website performance between April 2025 and March 2026:

- The TCP website (Nuquits.ca) recorded 10,288 active users over 12,998 sessions, nearly doubling the previous year's traffic of 5,300 visitors.
- These users generated a total of 17,852 page views, indicating strong engagement with online resources.
- Website traffic increased sharply from February 2026 onward, corresponding with the March Quit campaign and associated paid social media activities.
- Organic social media was the top source of traffic, accounting for 43.4% of sessions (5,639), followed by paid search at 20% (2,603), direct traffic at 16.4% (2,132), and organic search at 7.8% (1,010).

[9] Impression is the total number of times a post was viewed, including by the same person.

TSA Mass Media Campaign

In 2025/26, Health launched the *TSA* mass media campaign to promote awareness of the legislation. The campaign aims to inform Nunavummiut about key regulatory changes, with particular emphasis on smoke-free requirements for publicly funded housing, GN staff housing, and motor vehicles when a minor is present. The launch included three public events in Iqaluit (at the Youth Centre, Legislative Assembly, and Nunavut Arctic College) to support community engagement. These events were designed to raise awareness of the legislation, promote cessation supports, and encourage dialogue on tobacco and vaping use.

The campaign has been delivered through a multi-channel digital strategy, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, ensuring broad reach across diverse audiences and the territory. It is expected to conclude in June 2026, and a comprehensive evaluation and performance report is expected in December 2026. Findings will inform future communications strategies and ongoing *TSA* implementation efforts.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Health offers several training and education initiatives which focus on community-based outreach, capacity building, and professional development and resource enhancement.

In 2025/26, the TCP supported community-based and culturally grounded tobacco reduction activities, including close collaboration with community health representatives (CHRs) to plan and implement educational outreach activities in their respective communities. Funding was allocated to 10 communities (Arctic Bay, Kugaaruk, Pond Inlet, Rankin Inlet, Gjoa Haven, Kimmirut, Baker Lake, Sanikiluaq, Clyde River, and Arviat) to support the delivery of locally organized events and activities focused on tobacco, vaping, and cannabis-related programming (e.g., radio shows, store booths, school presentations, cigarette butt picking challenge, etc.). These initiatives were aligned with key awareness events such as Tobacco Reduction Month, World No Tobacco Day, and Community Cigarette Butt Clean-Up. By offering culturally relevant and community-specific programming, these efforts effectively reinforced tobacco reduction messaging, supported behavior change, and contributed to the broader territorial objectives of health promotion and harm reduction.

Health also makes efforts to build knowledge and capacity among HCPs, CHRs, public health nurses (PHNs), health and wellness workers (HWWs), and community wellness coordinators (CWCs) to support the delivery of tobacco reduction initiatives in their communities. Throughout the fiscal year, training sessions were delivered to enhance the capacity of Health workers. Each session included a concise overview of recent changes to the tobacco legislation, as well as information on the health risks associated with tobacco, vaping, and cannabis use. Also, topics covered included practical tips for holding outreach events in the community and a cannabis mass media campaign preview. A total of 14 HCPs, 27 HWWs and 11 CHRs and two PHNs participated in four virtual education sessions, virtual training sessions, while 10 HCPs attended an in-person training session.

COMPLIANCE MONITORING AND INSPECTIONS

Alongside education and training, tobacco retail enforcement is an important component of the *TSA*. Nunavummiut expressed support for increased education on the health effects of tobacco and smoking products use, and clearly requested more enforcement.

As of this fiscal year, 96 tobacco retailers are actively engaged in the sale of tobacco and smoking products in Nunavut.[10] In addition to tobacco retailers, three licensed cannabis retailers were operating in Nunavut.
The total number of active tobacco retailers in Nunavut remained relatively stable compared to fiscal year 2024/25, increasing from 95 to 96 retailers, indicating no significant change in the retail availability of tobacco and smoking products.

Health employs a progressive enforcement approach that includes a combination of education visits, inspections, monitoring activities, and warnings. EHOs aim to conduct two inspections per year of all active registered tobacco retailers in Nunavut to promote and assess retailers' compliance with the *TSA*. During on-site routine inspections at retail locations, EHOs provide, as needed, information on the provisions being monitored, answer questions, and listen to concerns that retailers raise. EHOs may also

[10] The number of active retailers is extracted from the Hedgehog inspection software the EHOs use to conduct inspections. This figure does not accurately reflect the list of registered retailers from Finance due to a discrepancy that will require data reconciliation to resolve.

conduct inspections in response to complaints that they receive. If a retailer is found to be non-compliant with the *TSA*, as a first response, EHOs may issue verbal or written warnings and consider providing targeted education to induce, encourage, or compel the business to correct the non-compliance. Follow-ups on previously non-compliant items may occur at subsequent inspections.

A retailer is identified as “Not in Compliance” when at least one infraction is identified during an inspection. The number of inspections conducted and the corresponding non-compliance rate for fiscal year 2025/26 are provided below. It is important to note that the figures presented in this report exclude alternative smoking products, such as vapour products, as Health continues to have limited information regarding their distribution and sale within the territory.

Unlike tobacco retailers, who are required to obtain a tobacco dealer permit through Finance, businesses selling vapour products are not subject to a comparable territorial licensing requirement. This underscores the need for strengthened monitoring, data collection and oversight mechanisms to support a more accurate assessment of the availability and sale of vapour products in Nunavut moving forward.

Due to the absence of a territorial licensing requirement specific to vapour products, Health is unable to determine the exact number of licensed tobacco vendors that also sell vapour products in Nunavut. However, based on the Biannual Reports[11] received during last fiscal year, four retailers reported carrying vapour products among the smoking products sold in their establishments.[12]

It should be noted that the TCP received requests for information related to the sale of vapour and shisha products, which suggests a growing interest and emerging questions related to vapour and shisha products and ongoing uncertainty regarding the regulatory requirements applicable to these products.

[11] Under the *TSA*, retailers of tobacco and smoking products in Nunavut are required to submit a completed report form every two years to inform the Minister of Health of the ongoing sale of tobacco and smoking products at their retail location. This new reporting requirement was implemented for the first time in February 2025.
[12] This data will be confirmed once the EHOs’ inspection reports are completed.

In 2025/26, EHOs have completed a total of 132 tobacco retailer inspections, including 114 routine inspections and 18 inspections in response to complaints.

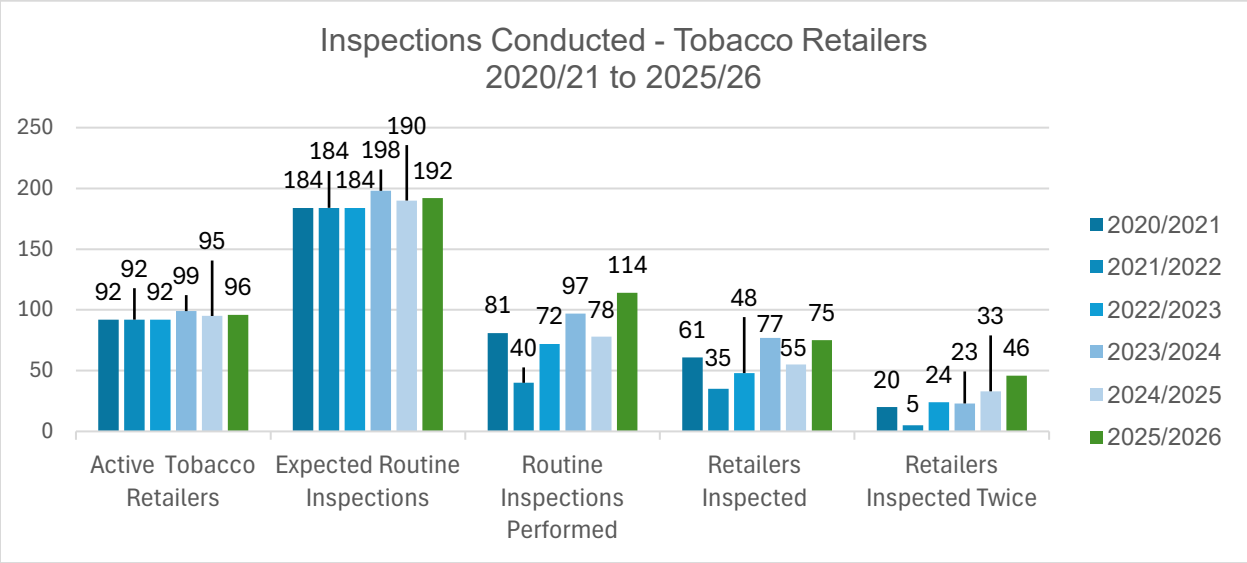
The inspections covered 75 out of 96 (78%) active retailers across the territory, with 46 out of 75 (61%) being subject to two routine inspections. The overall non-compliance rate of the inspected retailers was 24%.

The number of routine inspections has increased by 36 (46%) in the previous 12 months, reaching 20 (36%) more retailers. Figure 1 and Figure 2 below illustrate the trend in inspection activities over the past six years.[13]
The *TSA* provisions most frequently not complied with by retailers are the following:

- Prohibited advertising and promotional activities;
- Records of steps taken – training, policies, practices, and procedures requirements;
- No smoking signage requirements;
- Smoke-free workplace;
- Prohibited place.

[13] This analysis is based on routine inspections only and does not include inspection EHOs conducted in response to complaints. Routine inspections are a more comprehensive activity.

Figure 1: Tobacco Inspections Activities Over Six Fiscal Years

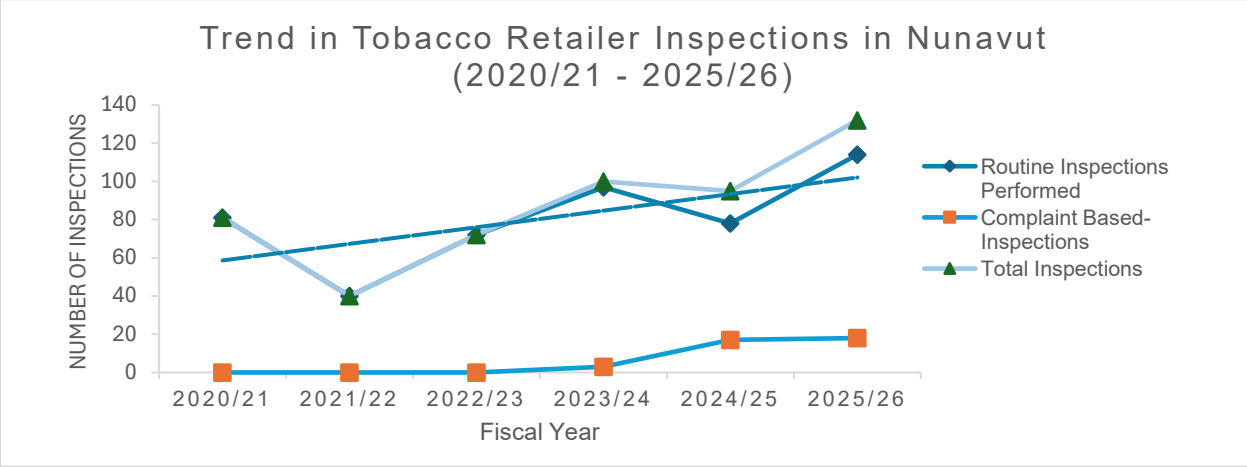


**The 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 data are respectively found in the Chief Medical Officer of Health's 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Act Annual Report and Minister of Health's 2023/24 and 2024/25 TSA reports.*

Although the number of active tobacco retailers remained relatively stable between fiscal years 2020/21 and 2025/26, inspection activities varied across reporting years. This reflects various operational constraints including the availability of human resources and logistical tools/resources necessary for conducting inspections.

Routine inspections performed generally remained below expected inspection targets; however, inspection performance improved substantially in 2025/26, with the highest number of routine inspections and retailers inspected twice recorded during the six-year period.

Figure 2: Trend in Tobacco Retailer Inspections Since 2020/21



**The 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 data are respectively found in the Chief Medical Officer of Health's 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 Tobacco Control and Smoke-Free Act Annual Report and Minister of Health's 2023/24 and 2024/25 TSA reports.*

The data suggest an overall upward trend in tobacco retailer inspections in Nunavut between fiscal years 2021/22 and 2025/26, reflecting increased monitoring and enforcement activities. Complaint-based inspections also increased in recent fiscal years, potentially reflecting greater awareness of tobacco control requirements and enhanced responsiveness to compliance concerns. Although a decline in routine inspections was observed in 2024/25, overall inspection activity rebounded substantially in 2025/26.

CONCLUSION

The *TSA* aims to protect Nunavummiut from second-hand smoke exposure, dissuade youth from initiating the use of tobacco, vaping, and cannabis products, de-normalize tobacco use and smoking, and reduce the visibility and accessibility of tobacco and smoking products. Although a modest decline in smoking prevalence has been observed, tobacco use in Nunavut remains the highest in Canada and vaping has emerged as an increasing public health concern, particularly among youth.
Health has observed positive compliance trends in some areas, including smoke-free public places and GN staff housing, as well as increased awareness of legislative obligations among retailers and the public. However, enforcement and compliance overall remain a challenge that warrants continued attention.

There are several factors affecting implementation, such as limited enforcement capacity within Health. Effective implementation of the *TSA* also requires stronger interdepartmental collaboration. Nunavut's geographic and operational realities, evolving nicotine, vaping markets, and specialty smoking products[14], and existing gaps in regulatory and enforcement frameworks are also contributing factors.

Legislation is an effective public health tool for advancing tobacco control objectives, even if its effects are not immediate. In 2025/26, Health continued to support the implementation of the *TSA* through inspection, compliance, outreach, and public awareness activities and will continue these efforts in the years ahead.

Health will also continue to explore opportunities to address these challenges. The Department will build on its efforts in education, prevention, retailer outreach, cessation supports, and community awareness initiatives, while strengthening collaboration with partners to support the implementation and enforcement of the *TSA* across Nunavut. Together, these efforts aim to improve health outcomes for all Nunavummiut.

[14] Specialty smoking products include tobacco, vapour, shisha, and other smoking-related products typically sold in specialty retail establishments.