



Tuesday » July
24 » 2007

Shoppers to quit selling smokes

New stores opening in Sask., Alta., Man. will not include tobacco

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REGINA -- Shoppers Drug Mart is butting out of sales of tobacco at their newest locations.

The company implemented a policy about a year ago that new stores opening in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba will not include tobacco.

"We believe that that's the trend in those markets -- in terms of market demand and in terms of legislation and just societal expectations," said Pat Chapman, director of communications at Shoppers Drug Mart, from her office in Toronto.

Of the 28 Shoppers Drug Mart stores in the province, five don't sell tobacco.

Opinions were mixed about the move.

"It sucks," said Khir-a Smith, 21, as she perused the Victoria Square Shopping Centre Shoppers Drug Mart in Regina, one of the stores no longer selling tobacco.

"I'm a smoker. It's a pain in the butt. I work over here and when I get off work, I need to buy smokes. It's a pain in the butt not having something close by."

Yet for ex-smoker Bryan Krueger, 40, the decision is a sound one that can only bring benefits.

"I don't think smoking's good for anybody," he said.

Would the new policy have affected his smoking habits?

"Not just one store," he conceded. "It's going to have to take more than one store to affect anybody's smoking habits."

However, he remains optimistic the new policy is a sign that will mean a healthier future.

"It's just a change of the times -- the way things are going, I guess," he said. "I'm all about people being healthier."

While Saskatchewan does not have specific legislation in place to prohibit shop owners from selling tobacco, the province has had in place the Tobacco Control Act since 2002.

The act is meant to control the sale and use of tobacco and tobacco-related

products. The act emphasizes prohibiting the sale and promotion of cigarettes to minors. In January 2005, the act required enclosed public spaces to be smoke-free.

"I think that the goal with respect to tobacco control is to protect the health of people in Saskatchewan, and the act does focus on keeping young people from smoking, reducing exposure to second-hand smoke and trying to denormalize tobacco use by making it the exception rather than the rule," said Mary Martin-Smith, director of health promotion at Saskatchewan Health.

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