

## 10 health stories that mattered: May 30–June 5

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada concluded its six-year investigation with the release of [94 recommendations to redress abuses of indigenous people](#) in residential schools. Health-related measures included annual progress reports on Aboriginal health, the recognition and use of traditional healing practices in treatment of Aboriginal patients, sustainable funding for Aboriginal healing centres, cultural competency training for all health care professionals, and mandatory Aboriginal health courses in medical and nursing schools.
- Quebec's top court ordered [tobacco companies to pay \\$15 billion in damages](#) to groups representing about one million smokers in one of the biggest civil cases in Canadian history. The court ruled that Imperial Tobacco Canada, Rothmans Benson & Hedges Inc. and JTI-MacDonald Corp. must pay up to \$100 000 per plaintiff for failing to properly warn customers about the dangers of smoking, underestimating the evidence of harm from smoking, engaging in unscrupulous marketing and destroying documents. The tobacco companies will appeal the judgment, but are still required to pay at least a billion dollars in moral damages, plus all punitive damages.
- Bans on flavoured tobacco products came into effect in [New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Alberta](#). The sanctions in Nova Scotia also include menthol flavoured tobacco — a measure that [Imperial Tobacco will challenge in court](#), alleging that the province has overstepped its jurisdiction. Despite the lawsuit, Alberta announced it will introduce a similar ban on menthol tobacco products in the fall. Manitoba also introduced legislation to [prohibit the sale of electronic cigarettes](#) to minors and ban their use in most indoor public places.
- The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario approved new bylaws to increase the [transparency of its disciplinary processes and protections for patients](#). Among the measures, the college will now let the public know if a doctor has been disciplined in another jurisdiction, faces criminal charges, has received a verbal warning about mistakes or misconduct, or has been ordered to take remedial education. The college is also calling for mandatory revocation of doctors' licences in all cases involving sexual contact with a patient, and is developing a policy for sharing information with police about doctors who may have committed crimes.
- British Columbia medical marijuana producer Tilray divulged that some licensed producers are [paying doctors to prescribe pot](#) and refer patients. The company cut ties with the Canadian Medical Cannabis Industry Association over repeated refusals by other members to adopt a code of ethics that would prohibit such kickbacks. Tilray also showed the *National Post* unsolicited invoices from [doctors and specialized clinics seeking direct payments](#) or a percentage of cannabis sales for patient referrals. The industry association, for its part, told the *Toronto Star* that [Tilray resigned before the matter was fully discussed](#) or resolved.
- New Brunswick will provide [abortion services to Prince Edward Island women](#) starting July 1. Abortions are not currently available on the island and women have had to travel to Nova Scotia to get the procedure under provincial coverage. During the recent PEI election, Premier Wade MacLauchlan said he would improve access to abortion but would not make the procedure available on the island.
- The BC Health Coalition reported that access to [home support for seniors has worsened](#) over the past decade despite provincial efforts to overhaul community care. The number of seniors receiving home support in 2013/14 was virtually identical to the number receiving it in 2001/02. Yet there was a 49% increase in people over 85 during that period as well as increased demand for home support due to shorter hospital stays and limited access to residential care.
- Nova Scotia's [new provincial health authority will spend \\$1.82 billion](#) in its first year — \$300 million more than the budget endorsed in the legislature just two months ago. The authority said it plans to make up the difference with revenue from parking fees, retail operations and room rates, as well as savings on executive salaries, bulk buying, heating costs and streamlined services.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada launched a [national consultation on Lyme disease](#). The agency is asking for input from the medical community, governments, patients and the general public to develop a federal framework for surveillance, prevention and control, and awareness of the disease. The agency will accept comments until June 30, 2015.
- Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall announced that the [province will consider keeping its only hyperbaric chamber](#), after months of lobbying by the medical community and Moose Jaw residents. Wall made an earlier decision to exclude the chamber from plans for the city's new hospital based on recommendations by health officials that it wasn't used enough. Now, the province will turn to local organizations that have offered funds to keep the chamber. — Lauren Vogel, *CMAJ*

CMAJ 2015; DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-5087