Author’s response to reviews

Title: Opening windows and closing gaps: A case analysis of Canada's 2009 tobacco additives ban and its policy lessons

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Author’s response to reviews:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript. It was heartening that you saw the value of our analysis. We do think that it is an important contribution to the literature examining the factors that shape agenda-setting for tobacco control policy. We have systematically revised our manuscript based on the reviewer feedback and describe the changes below. We have also further edited the manuscript for clarity as we found some awkward sentences.

Technical Comments:

(1) Please move your 'List of Abbreviations' to before your 'Declarations' section.

We have moved this section.

Editor Comments:

The paper addresses an interesting research question regarding the policy adoption of a cigarette additives ban in Canada. While the paper is generally well written, the reviewers have pointed to minor revisions that are necessary to address. In particular, the second reviewer has suggested additional methodological considerations that need to be incorporated into the paper.
Thank you again for seeing the value of this analysis. We have systematically addressed the reviewers comments.

BMC Public Health operates a policy of open peer review, which means that you will be able to see the names of the reviewers who provided the reports via the online peer review system. We encourage you to also view the reports there, via the action links on the left-hand side of the page, to see the names of the reviewers.

Reviewer reports:

Michael Chaiton (Reviewer 1): The paper, "Opening windows and closing gaps: A case analysis of Canada's 2009 tobacco additives ban and its policy lessons" presents an interesting look at Canada's ground breaking flavour regulations and presents some lessons for other jurisdictions on the process of public health policy making.

My only major comment is that the paper I think really makes the case that the missing ingredient for policy making in Canada was evidence-based research, particularly technocratic policy research. The consistent story that the law was made possible by presenting a policy solution suitable for the political climate at the right moment in time. It seems that while there was discussion regarding the law particularly those products that ended up excluded. There was minimal research into the potential policy effects of the regulations themselves. This lack of resourcing by the government may have facilitated the ability to pass a useful public health law but left the legislation vulnerable to the much greater knowledge of industry. This potential suggests that post implementation monitoring and evaluation is a crucial component of the implementation process. Furthermore, it seems to suggest that sufficient research of the technical details is also important but must be done in a way that does not hold up the process.

Thank you for these observations. I think these points illustrate the need for further study in these types of cases. It is difficult to add these points to our own paper because we are not wanting to reduce the process that led to the adoption of Bill C-32 to specific prescriptions for what is required to inform this process. In other words, we are reluctant to say that one or two things could have happened to reduce the limitations of the Bill, but rather to present this analysis as a rich understanding of the factors that did shape the process. We did add a study by the reviewer that we had not seen when writing this manuscript which does provide evidence of the effects of both the loopholes and what was included in the legislation (p. 9, paragraph 1): ‘A study by Chaiton and colleagues …’ Also, we think that we have outlined the points being made. We
note that the monitoring by the NGOs was an important factor for keeping this issue on the policy agenda.

Additionally, in terms of definition of the law, it's important to highlight that the law did remove additives from all products with filters, which in the end may have been more important to the success of the law than the size loophole.

I think this is an important point, given that any cigarette or filtered cigar product was included in the ban. The size loophole was still very important because unfiltered cigarillos were still being sold in attractive flavours. It is difficult to make a pointed judgement about whether the inclusion of filtered products was more important than the weight standard.

Minor comments

There are a number of referencing typos throughout that should be fixed

P4 line 18 streams or stream?

Thank you, this has been changed to ‘stream’.

P6 line 14. I believe that the Quebec Coalition was founded in 1996 not the 80's while CCS is much older.

Thanks for this clarification. We have added a footnote providing the dates that these organizations were established.

Irene Lambraki, Ph.D. (Reviewer 2): I enjoyed reading the draft article that presents a case study about Canada's experience with getting the first tobacco additives ban (Bill C-32) adopted in 2009. The study applies Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework and Helco's conceptualization of the development of welfare policy to understand the process and conditions that got the first tobacco additives ban adopted, the challenges encountered and the role that NGOs played
throughout the policy process. While Canada has a rich and successful history in moving tobacco control policies forward to present day, the study offers insights (e.g., about framing, technical aspects of the policy process, etc) that can benefit others involved in similar policy efforts in their own jurisdictions. Overall, I feel the findings of this study will be of interest to people involved in and/or researching policymaking processes, tobacco control and/or public health.

Thank you for this positive feedback.

COMPULSORY REVISIONS:

Research Q's or Objectives:

You have a background section, a section on conceptual framework and methods, but no research questions or research objectives stated. Please add as this is recommended as part of BMH Public Health's manuscript instructions.

Thank you for pointing this out. We have rephrased and repositioned our purpose statement. It now reads, “The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that lead to the adoption of Canada’s first tobacco additives ban (Bill C-32) in 2009.” (Page 3, last paragraph)

Methods Section (page 4 lines 38-59 and page 5 lines 4-18):

There is some information that needs to be added to provide the reader with greater clarity about methods, including any efforts used to establish the trustworthiness of your qualitative study.

The manuscript identifies key informant interviews and documents as the data sources. Please indicate whether these were semi-structured or unstructured interviews along with when interviews were conducted (e.g., between [month] and [month], [year]).

We have added this information in paragraph 1 of the methods section (Page 4).
You indicate that a range of documents were identified. Please describe how documents were identified (e.g., through key informants, online search using particular search terms?).

On Page 5 lines 11-16, information on how data was coded and analysed is presented. I am interested to know what was involved in the coding and analysis process. For instance, under "Author's Contribution" section on page 15: lines 34-40, it indicates that RLen and AR contributed to data analysis. Were both researchers involved with coding of data? If so, was there effort to ensure inter-coder reliability to verify and refine codes with any disagreements resolved through discussion? If inter-coder check was conducted, please indicate this.

This is an important point, thank you. We have described the coding process undertaken by the two authors. Please see paragraph 1, page 5. We have added the following: “The lead author conducted the initial analysis. AR conducted a second analysis of the transcripts. The two authors compared findings and any differing interpretations were resolved through discussion. However, there was general agreement about the key events identified, the thematic structure of the arguments for and against the Bill and key challenges and opportunities identified by the informants. The document analysis was also used to corroborate the results from the interview analysis.”

I am also not clear whether triangulation of data was employed as part of your analysis. It sounds as though there might have been triangulation of data across key informants at least based on what was heard during the interviews. For instance, you interviewed key informants representing different types of organizations (and thus perspectives) and on page 4: lines 51-55, it indicates there was consistency heard across the different informants during the interviews. Were data from documents, interviews and/or between documents and interviews triangulated? Please briefly state this if so. Also, please briefly note other efforts used to establish trustworthiness of data as relevant.

Please see comment above. We now note that the documents were used to corroborate and support the findings from the interviews. In this way we triangulated the findings from the different sources to construct our narrative.
Results Section (starting page 5):

The quotes from key informants or documents that were used to illustrate key points were effective. However, please check quotes to ensure the anonymity of each key informant is protected. For instance, under "Availability of Data and Materials" section on page 15: lines 48-51, it indicates that "interview data won't be shared in order to ensure the protection of the informants' anonymity." However, on page 7: lines 35-38, clearly reveals that one of the key informants was the former communications person to the former Harper government. Please correct this.

We have anonymized this quote by removing ‘the communications director for’ and replacing it with ‘(involved in the campaign of) Stephen Harper’.

Other compulsory comments:

Make sure the referencing style is correct and consistent. For instance, on page 8, lines 5-6 where a Standing Committee on Health Report, 2009 is referenced after the quote with no numbered reference to follow. In comparison, page 8: line 10, references another Standing Committee on Health Report, 2009 after the quotation that was drawn from that report and that sentence ends with reference number: (30)(30). Please correct as is appropriate.

There are a few places where the sentences need fixing. These are the ones I caught:

Page 8: Lines 24-25.
Page 10: lines 4-5
Page 15: line 37 (Author's contributions section)

Please ensure references in the reference list conform to BMC Public Health requirements.

We have gone through the manuscript and have edited the content for clarity. We have also edited the intext references and the reference list to conform with the journal style. Thanks for pointing out these issues.
DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

It might be useful to present a brief preamble at the start of the results section (Page 5) to orient the reader to how the results are structured.

We have added this description at the beginning of the results section.

Under each stream in the results section, please consider providing some details about what Kingdon's Framework says is important to each stream. For example, Page 6: line 54 introduces the "Politics Stream". Consider adding a brief description about how the politics stream relates to the political climate (e.g., impending elections, change in government, interest groups lobbying activities, or other) and how this climate shapes political receptiveness to change and how proposed policies are evaluated. Then go into your results for that stream.

Thanks for this suggestion. We have added a brief segue at the beginning of the policy and politics stream sections. We agree that this provides a clearer introduction to the analysis that we go on to present.