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May 9, 2008

Honourable George Abbott  
Minister of Health  
PO Box 9050  
STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Abbott:

Re: Bill 36: Banning Smoking in Vehicles Carrying Children

On behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon Division, and the Clean Air Coalition, which is comprised of the BC Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon, we would like to extend our thanks and appreciation for facilitating the introduction of Bill 36, which will ban smoking in vehicles carrying children under the age of 16, into the Legislative Assembly.

The health effects of second-hand smoke - in adults and children – are undeniable. Children who breathe second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer health problems such as sudden infant death syndrome, asthma, and cancer and cardiovascular disease later in life. And, according to the Canadian Medical Association, infants and children are more severely affected by the exposure of second-hand smoke than adults because they are smaller, have immature immune systems and have higher respiratory rates.

We are very pleased that the BC government is moving forward with legislation to protect British Columbian children from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke in automobiles. This is an important initiative and demonstrates your government's continuing commitment to reducing tobacco consumption and protecting the health of all British Columbians.

As you are aware, in addition to BC, there are now four provinces/territories (ON, NS, PEI, Yukon) in Canada that have brought forward legislation to prohibit smoking in vehicles carrying children, and three others (NB, Man, Nfld & Lab) are considering doing so, or are watching what other provinces are doing. Nova Scotia (age 19) and Yukon Territory (age 18) have adopted legislation. In Ontario, a government bill has been introduced and is before the provincial legislature (Bill 69). The PEI Government has tabled a draft bill. New Brunswick is considering doing the same. Manitoba and Newfoundland & Labrador are watching what other provinces are doing. As well, a private member's bill has been introduced in Manitoba, and a news report says that an Alberta MLA will introduce a private member's bill. And,

worldwide, Arkansas, California, Maine, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, South Australia and Tasmania have already banned smoking in motor vehicles with kids.

The Clean Air Coalition and the Canadian Cancer Society are working together to imagine a smoke-free BC, including in vehicles carrying minor children. As the minimum age which minors can purchase tobacco in BC is 19, which is also the age of majority, we urge you to consider amending Bill 36 to ban smoking in vehicles with children under age 19, as Nova Scotia and the Yukon have done. Also of particular note in British Columbia, we see a patchwork of age-cut-offs evolving as the municipalities of Richmond, Surrey, and White Rock are in the process of establishing age 19 as the legal age limit (see attached documents).

The public also supports the age of 19. A recent Ipsos Reid poll conducted for the Canadian Cancer Society, in February 2008, found that the majority of British Columbians (76 per cent) say they support a ban on smoking "In cars or other privately-owned vehicles carrying children and youth under the age of 19" years of age (Canadian Cancer Society 2008 Advocacy Public Opinion Research).

Thank you again for the initiation of Bill 36 and considering the views presented to you in this letter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Barbara Kaminsky  
CEO  
Canadian Cancer Society,  
BC and Yukon Division



Scott McDonald  
Executive Director  
BC Lung Association



R.F. Bobbe Wood, MA  
President & CEO  
Heart and Stroke Foundation  
of B.C. & Yukon

cc Solicitor General, John van Dongen  
Jack Boomer - Director, Clean Air Coalition of BC