



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Once and For All! BC Should Stop Pharmacies from Selling Cigarettes Say Leading Health Advocates

British Columbia -- Selling tobacco products is incompatible with a pharmacy's mission to promote health say leading BC health advocates - the BC Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon and the Canadian Cancer Society, BC & Yukon Division.

All three organizations want BC to ban the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies.

"Health care and cigarettes don't mix," said Scott McDonald, Executive Director for the BC Lung Association. "It is a blatant conflict of interest for pharmacies, providers of health care, to also profit from the sale of harmful products known to cause cancer, heart and pulmonary diseases."

Pharmacists are amongst the most accessible of all health care professionals and play an increasingly important role in helping people maintain and improve their health. Helping people stop smoking is one of the most important areas of health promotion.

"I've never met a pharmacist who *wanted* to sell cigarettes," said Bobbe Wood, President and CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon. "The resistance we face is from some business owners who are putting profits over doing the right thing, not typically from the pharmacists, whose vocation is health promotion and disease prevention."

"We also know that the College of Pharmacists of BC, whose mandate is to protect the public by ensuring pharmacists provide safe and effective care to help people achieve better health, is not in favour of pharmacies selling tobacco products, so clearly it is time for government action to ban this practice," Wood added.

"Nine other Canadian provinces and territories have already banned pharmacy sales of tobacco products. Why the delay in British Columbia? BC used to be the leader in tobacco control in the country. That is no longer the case," added Barbara Kaminsky, CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society, BC & Yukon Division.

In terms of various political parties' position on this issue, here are the results of a recent survey commissioned by the three health organizations:

- The BC Liberal Party said it does not support segregating retailers into those that can and cannot sell tobacco.
- The BC New Democratic Party said it supports the ban and, in fact, introduced a Private Member's Bill seeking such a ban during a previous session in the Legislature.
- The BC Green Party also supports the ban.
- The BC Conservative Party did not answer the survey.

"People don't expect to be able to purchase cigarettes or other tobacco products when they visit their doctors or dentists' offices, and they shouldn't expect to buy them at the pharmacy," added McDonald. "Pharmacies are places people go to get well – not to buy products which when used as intended cause death and disease."

A BC Stats survey conducted in January 2007 for the Clean Air Coalition of B.C. found that the majority of British Columbians - 71 percent - support the ban of tobacco sales in pharmacies.

For complete BC tobacco control-related survey results, visit the Clean Air Coalition of B.C. website at www.cleanaircoalitionbc.com. Led by the BC Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon and

supported by the Canadian Cancer Society, BC & Yukon Division, the Clean Air Coalition of B.C. exists to promote smoke-free environments, tobacco use prevention and advocate for universal access to quit smoking support.

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BC Tobacco Use

BC has the lowest smoking rate in Canada, but is home to the third largest smoking population after Ontario and Quebec. Tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of death and disease, costing the BC economy a reported \$2.7 billion in direct and indirect costs.

More than six hundred thousand BC smokers (17 percent) continue to smoke. Six thousand British Columbians die every year from smoking-related illnesses – twice as many as from alcohol, suicide, and homicide combined. Thousands more are disabled by lung and heart diseases, and countless others suffer the consequences due to second-hand smoke exposure.

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