



May 12, 2006

Letter to the editor:

Public health supporters received a boost on May 11 when the B.C. Court of Appeal upheld the class action certification in Knight v. Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited. The class action lawsuit seeks damages for the marketing of "light" and "mild" cigarettes by Imperial Tobacco in B.C.

The judgment allows the class certification to proceed, which is a blow for Imperial Tobacco. The eventual court decision could cost the company millions of dollars. It is important to note that a BC court could tell Imperial Tobacco to cease its deceptive labeling in BC. Many smokers are unaware that the tobacco industry has used terms "light" and "mild" to suggest these cigarettes are less damaging. In fact, an international expert panel concluded that, "there is no convincing evidence of a meaningful health benefit to either individuals nor to the whole population resulting from cigarettes marketed as 'light' or 'mild'.

The tobacco industry is masterful in spreading misinformation. For years they have warned of dire economic consequences if BC goes 100% smoke-free in the hospitality sector. Yet, no economic evidence exists to support these dire predictions. Manitoba has successfully gone 100% smoke-free with no provision for designated smoking rooms (DSRs) and Ontario and Quebec will follow suit by May 31, 2006. Just as the B.C. Court of Appeal upheld the decision to proceed with the lawsuit about deception, we encourage the BC provincial government to review the economic evidence, support public health and make BC 100% smoke-free.

Jack Boomer  
Director, Clean Air Coalition of BC