

Pressure is mounting. In 2002, the World Health Organization's Scientific Advisory Committee on Tobacco Product Regulation (SACTob) issued recommendations on the issue. SACTob recommends both banning the specific terms 'light,' 'ultra-light,' 'mild,' and 'low-tar' but also 'names, trademarks, imagery and other means to convey the impression that the product provides a health benefit," a recommendation that goes beyond the *NOI*. Brazil and the European Union have both gone ahead and banned 'light' and 'mild.' And class actions are pending in the United States alleging that 'light' is a "consumer fraud." There is also widespread support at the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control for a worldwide ban.

Call to action

In our view, the 'light' and 'mild' deceptive trade practice has contributed to tens of thousands of deaths in Canada. And further delays will cause more. So why is Minister McLellan so reluctant to take action?

If there is a claim that the block to this reform is a legal one, the health community has given Health Canada several legal opinions that state that the government can enact plain packaging, a measure that goes much further than the recommended ban on package deception. Lawyers also confirm what should be obvious, that the *Tobacco Act* is in full force and effect even though the tobacco industry's challenge to the *Act* is still before the courts. There is no real legal block to this reform.

We believe that the decision to end package deception is one of political will, and political leadership, not a legal block. Like all other major tobacco reforms in Canada, if the health community wants this reform enough, it will press the Minister to deliver it as we did with our landmark warnings.

Action needed

1. Write your personal MP and/or all MPs within the area serviced by your organization. Arrange a meeting. If you need names, go to www.parl.gc.ca or call Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868.
2. Write the Honourable Anne McLellan, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health, Brooke Claxton Building, Postal Locator 0916A, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4.
3. Write both local and national newspaper editors for publication to keep the issue front and centre.
4. Work with the CANADIAN COALITION FOR ACTION ON TOBACCO to help mobilize support. Contact us. Send us copies of letters you write.

* an estimate by Dr. Mary Jane Ashley, Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto in "The 'light' and 'mild' consumer fraud," a brochure published by the Non-Smokers' Rights Association (2002).

For more information on the low-tar issue, visit the NSRA web site at www.nsra-adnf.ca or the PSC web site at www.smoke-free.ca.

CANADIAN COALITION FOR ACTION ON TOBACCO

Canadian Cancer Society · Canadian Council for Tobacco Control · Canadian Lung Association · Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada · Non-Smokers' Rights Association · Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. Affiliate Members: Action on Smoking and Health, Alberta · Canadian Dental Association · Canadian Medical Association · Coalition québécoise pour le contrôle du tabac · Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco