



**A message to MPs about Bill S-20**

No.2

**Promises to raise tobacco taxes and to provide serious funding for tobacco control are just two of the government's broken commitments on tobacco. With an election near, Canadian kids don't need more promises. They need promises to be kept.**



**Dear Member of Parliament:**

Every day makes a difference. Every five minutes another teen starts smoking. Every year, the tobacco industry hooks 100,000 kids. Of the thousands who become long-term users, half will die from cigarettes. Broken promises cause disease and death.



Yet, other than our new warnings, the government has failed to deliver on reforms it knows would work. Bill S-20 is no exception. This extraordinary Senate initiative will die on the order paper if Parliament is dissolved, a major setback for public health. Bill S-20 would work. It would create a \$360 to \$400 million<sup>1</sup> tobacco control fund from a levy imposed on tobacco sales.

Bill S-20 would establish an arm's-length agency to run an effective campaign free of the political interference that has hamstrung other tobacco control initiatives.

The government can kill Bill S-20. But it cannot kill the determination of tens of thousands of Canadians who are fighting for its passage.

Without this government's commitment to invest in mass media programmes and other initiatives, Canada's tobacco control efforts will not realize their potential.

**Promise**

In 1998, the government promised a replacement of Senate Bill 13, the forerunner of Bill S-20. Nearly two years later, we are still waiting.

**Promise**

Taxation has been very effective in preventing smoking. The government has continually promised a major increase, to return tobacco taxation to 1994 levels.<sup>2</sup> We are still waiting.

**Promise**

When tobacco taxes were rolled back in 1994, the Prime Minister promised that the new surtax on tobacco industry profits would fund the "largest" tobacco control campaign in Canadian history. Much of the funding was clawed back. Later, it was terminated. To date, the government has collected \$475 million through the surtax.<sup>3</sup> But only \$20 million now finds its way into tobacco control each year.

Our new warnings are only one part of a comprehensive plan. We need the entire plan. Canadian kids are still waiting. Keep the promises.

<sup>1</sup> Estimate by Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited, *The Globe and Mail*, September 28, 2000

<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, cigarettes in Ontario and Quebec now sell for approximately 60 percent of the price of cigarettes in Michigan and New York.

<sup>3</sup> Rothmans, Benson & Hedges Inc., *The Globe and Mail*, October 7, 2000.

**The National "Tobacco or Kids" Campaign**

ACTION ON SMOKING AND HEALTH, ALBERTA TOBACCO REDUCTION ALLIANCE, ALLIANCE POUR LA LUTTE AU TABAGISME- RÉGION DE QUÉBEC ET DE CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHES ASSOCIATION POUR LA SANTÉ PUBLIQUE DU QUÉBEC, BC CANCER AGENCY, CANADA LABOUR CONGRESS, CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY, CANADIAN CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION, CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR TOBACCO CONTROL, CANADIAN LUNG ASSOCIATION, CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION, CANCER CARE ONTARIO, CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH, CLEAN AIR COALITION OF BC, COALITION QUÉBÉCOISE POUR LE CONTRÔLE DU TABAC, COLLÈGE DES MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE DU CANADA-SECTION QUÉBEC, CONSEIL QUÉBÉCOIS SUR LE TABAC ET LA SANTÉ, FÉDÉRATION QUÉBÉCOISE DU SPORT ÉTUDIANT, NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE OF CANADA, NON-SMOKERS' RIGHTS ASSOCIATION, ONTARIO CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION ON TOBACCO, OTTAWA-CARLETON COUNCIL ON SMOKING AND HEALTH, PHYSICIANS FOR A SMOKE-FREE CANADA, REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON HEALTH UNIT, SMOKE-FREE NOVA SCOTIA, TORONTO PUBLIC HEALTH

