



A message to MPs about Bill S-20

No.3

The federal government spends less than \$1 on tobacco disease prevention for every \$100 it collects from tobacco taxes. The government should blush.

Dear Member of Parliament:

These numbers raise many embarrassing questions. For example, how can the government claim to be a prudent fiscal manager? It is spending just \$20 million on prevention efforts for an entirely preventable epidemic that is responsible for \$3 billion in health care costs annually.

In all, the federal government collects \$2.1 billion a year from tobacco taxes, not including GST. Yet Health Canada's current tobacco control budget is an anemic \$20 million a year to address Canada's leading cause of preventable disease and death. Why do we expect kids to take tobacco risks seriously when the government doesn't?

Another broken promise on tobacco

When tobacco taxes were rolled back in 1994, the government imposed a surtax on tobacco industry profits. In the words of the Prime Minister, this surtax was to "fund the largest anti-smoking campaign this country has ever seen." Within 18 months, most of the money was diverted. None of the current surtax is earmarked for tobacco control.

Each year, the federal government collects about \$80 million in tobacco taxes from illegal sales to youth. From an ethical perspective, shouldn't this money be invested in initiatives to prevent youth smoking?

Canada invests about the cost of a postage stamp in tobacco control

Based on an analysis of "best practices," the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends that between C\$7.70 to

C\$20.50 per capita be spent on tobacco control programmes. For example, Massachusetts spends C\$14, Mississippi C\$17 and Minnesota C\$11. Bill S-20 would raise about \$360 million a year, or about C\$11.0 per capita.

At the moment however, the federal government invests a paltry 65¢ per capita, not much more than the cost of a postage stamp per Canadian. Aren't Canadian kids worth as much as American kids?

Tobacco control saves governments money

Spending at "best practices" levels on a comprehensive tobacco control programme works. It ends up saving governments money. In about a decade, California experienced a 50 percent decline in consumption. For every dollar spent on tobacco control, the state saved \$10 in direct and indirect costs.

Massachusetts saw sales fall 35 percent in six years. These states both saw declines in adolescent use while teen smoking was rising rapidly elsewhere. Canada has a 30 percent teen smoking rate. Only 10 percent of California teens smoke. The numbers speak for themselves.

Here at home, we have had nothing but broken promises related to serious funding for tobacco control. Canadians are becoming understandably impatient. Pass Bill S-20. Or produce a government bill that will achieve the same public health objectives. Canada deserves a "best practices" approach. Kids deserve a chance.

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

