



A message to MPs about Bill S-20

No.4

Have you noticed the ads published by tobacco manufacturers expressing concern about youth smoking? Tobacco companies say they support Bill S-20 and the \$400 million¹ health fund it would create. Don't believe them.

Dear Member of Parliament:

The cigarette makers say they don't want your kids. Or your grandchildren. Like umbrella salesmen aren't interested in rain.

The vast majority of the industry's new customers come from the adolescent market. Without the kids, the industry dies.² These claims come from some of the same folks whose internal documents show that they practiced a rather stunning economy with the truth about the risks of their products, about addiction and about nicotine manipulation.

Why would tobacco manufacturers support Bill S-20?

No one outside the industry knows for sure. But some analysts believe that the two companies that profess support for Bill S-20 see their support as a low risk / high gain position to embrace. They believe that the companies calculated that Bill S-20 was unlikely to pass. Or if it did, support for passage would position the companies to argue for inclusion on the board of the independent foundation that would run the tobacco control programme envisioned by Bill S-20.

Either way, support for Bill S-20 gave them an opportunity to run a million-dollar media campaign

repositioning themselves as a reformed industry solidly opposed to youth smoking.³

Tobacco makers open the door for a \$400 million tobacco control fund

Support for Bill S-20 gave the manufacturers a public relations coup. But was there any downside? Absolutely. Cigarette makers are now on the public record acknowledging that the industry and the tobacco market can absorb a \$400 million annual levy for tobacco control initiatives. This is close to what Bill S-20 calls for. These companies have conceded that there is no real block to the creation of such a fund. The apparent block is political will.

We appeal to MPs. Call the industry's bluff. Support Bill S-20. Or, if an election prevents passage of Bill S-20, support replacement legislation in the new year that will achieve the same public health purpose.

1 Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited, *The Globe and Mail*, September 28, 2000

2 Phil Hiltz was the *New York Times* health policy specialist and expert in tobacco industry internal documents. In *Smokescreen: The Truth Behind the Tobacco Industry Coverup*, he says, "it is not possible to run a cigarette business without actively working the sidewalks where the children are."

3 For decades, the industry denied interest in kids. In *Smokescreen*, Hiltz makes it clear that Canadian manufacturers have unclean hands. He writes: "the most complete set of papers has come from the Canadian sister companies of the U.S. giants Reynolds, Philip Morris, and Brown and Williamson... in the hundreds of pages of advertising documents from two companies, Imperial and RJR-Macdonald, the targeting has not been hidden. They specifically target children above all other groups."

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

