

# campaign for a **smoke-free** alberta

## - **NEWS RELEASE** -

**Thursday, June 24, 2010**

### **ALBERTA GOVERNMENT RECEIVES TOBACCO REDUCTION AWARD**

Edmonton – Today a coalition of prominent health organizations presented the Alberta government with a Tobacco Reduction Achievement Award for its role in contributing to three consecutive years of reduced tobacco consumption. Health and Wellness Minister Gene Zwozdesky accepted the award on behalf of the Alberta government.

New data released by Alberta Finance has revealed that Albertans have smoked one billion fewer cigarettes since 2007. The consistent three-year reduction points to a strong cause-and-effect relationship between effective tobacco control policies and consumption.

“One billion fewer cigarettes have been smoked since 2007 and that is a very significant achievement” said Donna Hastings, Executive Vice President, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Alberta, NWT & Nunavut. “To put this number into perspective, one billion cigarettes placed end-to-end would stretch around the Earth twice. The Alberta government deserves full marks for its earnest efforts to reduce the impact of tobacco use on our quality of life”.

Since 2007, the Alberta government has approved the following tobacco reduction measures:

- Two tobacco tax increases totalling \$1.00 per pack of 25 cigarettes
- Legislation to make almost all workplaces and public places 100% smoke-free
- Prohibiting tobacco retail displays or “power walls”
- Banning tobacco sales in pharmacies, healthcare settings and post-secondary institutions
- Measures to reduce contraband tobacco
- Legislation to recover negligent Medicare costs from the tobacco industry
- The renewal of the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy

“The Alberta government has displayed a strong commitment to addressing the leading avoidable cause of disease and premature death in our province” said Tony Hudson, President and CEO of The Lung Association of Alberta/NWT. “These concerted efforts will enhance our quality of life and will help to reduce demands on our healthcare system. We encourage the government to continue in its efforts to further reduce tobacco use in Alberta in order to

sustain the momentum. Alberta is making good progress but more work needs to be done—especially to reduce youth tobacco use.”

Tobacco sales data released by Alberta Finance indicates that per capita consumption fell by an average of 7.1% annually since 2007. In contrast, tobacco consumption increased each year in the previous four years leading up to 2007.

“The results speak for themselves” said Bob Ascah, Board Chair of the Canadian Cancer Society, AB/NWT Division. “Alberta has made great progress on tobacco reduction in a very short period of time and we have set a strong course for the future. We must all continue to work together to prevent the spread of the tobacco epidemic to future generations”.

Tobacco kills an estimated 3,000 Albertans annually — representing about one in every five deaths. Tobacco is the only legal product that kills one-half of its users when used exactly as intended by its manufacturers. CSFA is an Alberta coalition of prominent health organizations that are working collaboratively to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco use.

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