

campaign for a **smoke-free** alberta

- NEWS RELEASE -

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ALBERTANS WANT STELMACH GOVERNMENT TO ENFORCE PROPOSED TOBACCO LAW

EDMONTON – A convincing majority of Albertans (75%) want the Stelmach government to invest in the proper implementation and enforcement of Bill 45—the proposed *Tobacco Reduction Act*—according to a recent public opinion poll.

The poll was conducted by POLLARA Inc. between September 20 and 23, 2007. A total of 599 Albertans were surveyed, resulting in a margin of error of plus or minus four percent, 19 times out of 20.

According to the survey results, a majority of Albertans (62%) also want the provincial government to take further action to reduce tobacco use beyond Bill 45. For example, two-thirds of Albertans want the government to sue tobacco companies to recover health care costs resulting from their deceptive marketing practices.

“This survey illustrates that Albertans support strong measures to reduce tobacco use including effective enforcement of Bill 45” said Les Hagen, executive director of Action on Smoking & Health. “Albertans expect the government to ensure that this legislation is properly enforced and implemented. Effective and equitable enforcement will ensure high rates of compliance and will create a level playing field for all businesses”.

“Albertans support Bill 45, but it’s clear they see it as only the beginning” said Dr. Charl Els, Alberta director for Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. “Bill 45 will bring Alberta’s tobacco legislation in line with that of other provinces. However the survey results indicate that Albertans want their government to be a leader in tobacco control. Tobacco companies must be held accountable for their deceptive marketing practices and legal action is warranted to recover the industry’s burden on the healthcare system.”

The survey also revealed that two-thirds of Albertans believe that tobacco use has a negative impact on the quality of life, and the same proportion believe that Bill 45 demonstrates the government’s commitment to improving the quality of life. A majority of Albertans (57%) believe that the legislative measures will encourage people to quit smoking.

“Albertans understand that tobacco use places a tremendous burden on our quality of life” said Tony Hudson, President of The Lung Association, Alberta and Northwest

Territories. "If the Alberta government is truly committed to improving the quality of life it must pass Bill 45 quickly and without weakening amendments. The survey demonstrates that there is broad public support for this important public health initiative".

Summary of survey findings:

- Three-quarters (75%) of Albertans want the province to invest in resources to properly implement and enforce the tobacco control measures contained in Bill 45;
- Three-in-five (62%) Albertans think more action is needed on the part of the government in addition to the proposed legislation to curb tobacco use.
- Nearly two-thirds of Albertans (65%) support the provincial government launching a lawsuit against tobacco companies to recover healthcare costs resulting from deceptive marketing practices, similar to those already underway in British Columbia and New Brunswick.
- Two-in-three (68%) respondents say that tobacco has a negative impact on the overall quality of life of Albertans, with 37% saying that it has a *very negative impact*.
- Two-in-three (65%) believe the smoking ban legislation demonstrates the government's commitment to improving residents' quality of life
- A majority of Albertans (57%) believe that the legislation will encourage smokers to quit.

Once Bill 45 is passed, the following provisions are currently scheduled take effect as follows:

- January 1, 2008: Smoke-free workplaces and public establishments.
- July 1, 2008: Ban on tobacco retail promotions and displays (powerwalls).
- January 1, 2009: Removal of tobacco sales from pharmacies, other healthcare settings and post-secondary institutions.

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