

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

## - NEWS RELEASE -

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### **TOBACCO REDUCTION BILL WILL IMPROVE EMPLOYERS' BOTTOM LINE**

A new report on the economic impact of Bill 45—the proposed Tobacco Reduction Act—concludes that the bill will improve the bottom line of Alberta employers by reducing sick leave, absenteeism and disability resulting from tobacco use.

The report was prepared by the Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta to address concerns about the potential economic impact of Bill 45.

The report reveals that tobacco is costing Alberta employers \$1.3 billion annually in increased sick leave, absenteeism and disability. By comparison, the provincial government spends approximately \$470 million annually on the healthcare costs associated with tobacco use.

“Tobacco use is costing Alberta employers dearly as the result of lost productivity, increased sick leave, absenteeism and disability” said Dr. Charl Els, Alberta director for Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. “Bill 45 will improve the bottom line of employers by reducing the illness and disability resulting from tobacco use. Health and productivity go hand-in-hand—you can’t have one without the other.”

The report also concludes that Bill 45 will have little, if any, impact on the hospitality sector. Scientific evidence collected from around the world has revealed that smoking bans do not have a net negative economic impact on bars, restaurants, hotels or gaming establishments.

“Many Alberta communities have passed 100% smoke-free bylaws without affecting local businesses” said Angeline Webb of the Canadian Cancer Society—Alberta/NWT Division. “The tobacco industry is the only sector affected by smoking bans since these bans lead to significant declines in tobacco use. Fortunately, there are no tobacco producers or manufacturers in Alberta”.

The report recommends that the proposed ban on tobacco powerwalls and pharmacy sales should be implemented simultaneously to reduce the potential economic impact of Bill 45 on remaining tobacco vendors. According to the report, staggered implementation may hurt tobacco vendors who could lose revenue due to reduced promotional payments or from reduced sales due to the removal of in-store promotions. However increased consumer traffic resulting from a tobacco sales ban in pharmacies will more than compensate for any potential lost revenue among remaining tobacco vendors.

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"The powerwall ban and the tobacco sales ban in pharmacies must be implemented simultaneously to reduce the potential impact of the bill on remaining tobacco vendors", Dr. Els emphasized. "A level playing field is essential if this bill is to achieve its full potential and to minimize any potential impact on tobacco vendors."

Bill 45 is scheduled to receive final consideration in the fall session of the Alberta legislature. If passed without weakening amendments, the bill will represent one of the strongest provincial tobacco control laws in Canada.

The Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta is a coalition of 14 prominent Alberta organizations who support effective measures to reduce and prevent tobacco use.

The report can be viewed at:

[http://www.smokefreealberta.com/take\\_action/bill\\_45.html](http://www.smokefreealberta.com/take_action/bill_45.html)

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