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AN OPEN LETTER TO PROVINCIAL PREMIERS
MAY 29, 2023

It must not be “business as usual” for tobacco companies

Dear Premiers:

Your provinces have filed health care cost recovery lawsuits against Canada’s three major tobacco companies and their foreign parents. Now all provinces are in historic settlement negotiations with these companies. We urge you to ensure that your governments make reducing tobacco use and improving public health the top priority in these negotiations.

Tobacco causes a devastating toll in disease and death, a toll that is contributing to the ongoing crisis in the health care system. Everything possible must be done to reduce tobacco use.

An unparalleled history of wrongdoing

The tobacco industry’s behaviour in Canada over decades is shocking. The tobacco industry has advertised to children; marketed to women with images of slimness and fashion; concealed internal research; failed to warn consumers adequately; and used public relations campaigns to deny the negative health effects. The industry has also deceived the public through misleading advertising, including about “light” and “mild” cigarettes, and aggressively lobbied against tobacco control measures.

In response, your provinces filed lawsuits against the three biggest tobacco companies to recover health care costs caused by industry negligence and fraud. How negligent? Quebec Superior Court Justice Brian Riordan described the industry’s behaviour as “particularly reprehensible,” saying it “must be denounced and punished in the sternest of fashions.”

What a settlement should include

The three major Canadian tobacco companies are currently in bankruptcy protection as a result of these lawsuits, with total claims exceeding \$500 billion. The companies can only get out of bankruptcy protection with a settlement if the provinces agree. Thus, provinces have leverage to insist on strict measures. A settlement could forever change industry behaviour.

It cannot be “business as usual” for Big Tobacco moving forward. A settlement should include both significant funding for tobacco control as well as policy measures to control the industry and to reduce tobacco use, including:

- **Allocating substantial long-term funding – at least 10% of the distributions from the settlement – to a fund, independent of government, to reduce tobacco use.**
- **Ending all remaining tobacco promotion.**
- **Requiring tobacco companies to make substantial additional payments if targets to reduce tobacco use in Canada are not achieved.**
- **Requiring public disclosure of all secret internal tobacco company documents.**

Given that in 1998 U.S. state governments included measures to control the tobacco industry in similar settlements, Canadian provinces in 2023 can – and must – do much better. Provinces have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, an opportunity that should be pursued aggressively. Tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of disease and death in every province, killing 46,000 Canadians each year.

Canadians support strong action. A national Ipsos poll conducted in March 2023 found that 87% of Canadians support a requirement that a significant proportion of the funds from a settlement be used for initiatives to reduce smoking among both adults and youth.

Premiers, a settlement that prioritizes public health means that your governments will protect kids, save lives, and reduce health care costs. We appeal to your leadership to stop Big Tobacco and counter its wrongdoing, thus benefitting generations to come.



Andrea Seale
CEO
Canadian Cancer Society



Terry Dean
President and CEO
Canadian Lung Association



Doug Roth
CEO
Heart & Stroke

For more information, visit
StopBigTobacco.ca
