

**CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY  
NON-SMOKERS' RIGHTS ASSOCIATION  
PHYSICIANS FOR A SMOKE-FREE CANADA  
QUÉBEC COALITION FOR TOBACCO CONTROL**

February 14<sup>th</sup> 2000

Note to reporters:  
**New Warnings on Cigarette Packages**

As you know, at the end of January federal Health Minister Allan Rock tabled his specific proposals regarding new warnings on cigarette packages. We would like to provide you with our response to his announcement, as well as to some of the statements made by the tobacco industry.

Health organizations across Canada support these proposals. We consider them to be one of the most promising tools ever to increasing public knowledge of the magnitude as well as the scope of the health risks related to tobacco industry products.

As predicted, the tobacco industry is using every argument it can marshal in order to oppose the new warnings. In particular, the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council (CTMC) claims:

**"The proposed package warnings cannot be produced in Canada."**

This claim is preposterous. Even the printing companies that do work for the tobacco industry are unable to maintain the charade. One of the industry's printers quickly conceded that the new warnings are indeed "printable". (See attached clipping.) If the tobacco industry can produce color photos on matchbooks, it can do the same on cigarette packs.

**These warnings "will have little or no effect on reducing or deterring tobacco consumption."**

Although more explicit warnings are not a magic bullet, research shows that package warnings do lead to increased awareness of risks and to increased desire to quit. In test studies, many smokers say they would be more motivated to quit if this type of warning were included on their packs. One study found that warnings with pictures were 60 times more effective than warnings without. The results are clear and compelling.

A summary of research evidence commissioned by the Canadian Cancer Society is available on request (613-565-2522 #301), and research commissioned by Health Canada demonstrating the effectiveness of picture-based health warnings is available on the Internet at:  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/tobacco/bureau/current\\_research/index.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/tobacco/bureau/current_research/index.html).

**“By practically any measure, awareness of health risks is virtually universal.”**

Over several decades, the tobacco industry has done everything in its power to convince smokers and governments that the disastrous health effects of tobacco are either non-existent or grossly exaggerated by the medical community. The industry maintains that smoking is merely a statistically associated “risk factor” for certain diseases. It continues efforts to discredit research on the health effects of exposure to second-hand smoke and it equates the addictive effect of tobacco products with that of coffee or chocolate. Yet when it comes time to discuss what health warnings should be put on cigarette packs, the industry argues — as it has done each time better warnings have been proposed in 1969, 1988 and 1993 — that consumers are universally aware of the health risks of smoking.

Extensive survey research conducted by Health Canada prior to the Minister’s announcement demonstrates that most smokers are aware, in general terms, that cigarettes are harmful, but seriously underestimate the magnitude of the risk to their health. Consumers are frequently unaware of many of the specific conditions that have been conclusively linked to tobacco products, including strokes, heart attacks, mouth disease and impotence.

**“Mr. Rock’s approach” is “hysterical, confrontational and sloppy”.** (The CTMC position as summarized by the Globe and Mail, Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>)

It is to the industry’s advantage to attack the credibility of the Health minister by discrediting his motives on political grounds in order to distract attention from the health benefits of his proposals. The Canadian tobacco industry has done it before, according to recently discovered documents, with respect to the government’s intention to study plain packaging in 1994 (see attached article). Tactics included enlisting third-party allies (printers, retailers, etc.) to attack the proposals, discrediting the reputation of then Health Minister Diane Marleau and undermining the credibility of health groups.

As the public debate over these proposals will surely resurface during the upcoming public hearings before the Commons’ Standing Committee on Health, we hope this information will be useful to you.

Yours truly,

Ken Kyle, Director of Public Issues  
**Canadian Cancer Society**  
116 Albert Street, Suite 1010, Ottawa ON K1P 5G3  
(613) 565-2522 #301

Gar Mahood, Executive Director  
**Non-Smokers’ Rights Association**  
720 Spadina Ave, Suite 221, Toronto ON M5S 2T9  
416-928-2900  
[www.nsra-adnf.ca](http://www.nsra-adnf.ca)

Cynthia Callard, Executive Director  
**Physicians for a Smoke-free Canada**  
P.O. Box 4849, Station E, Ottawa ON K1S 5J1  
613-233-4878  
[www.smoke-free.ca](http://www.smoke-free.ca)

Louis Gauvin, Coordinator  
**Coalition québécoise pour le contrôle du tabac**  
819 Roy East, Montreal QC H2L 1E4  
514-598-5533