

Attention News Editors:

## **Business, labour and health groups unite for provincial smoke-free workplace legislation**

EDMONTON, April 18 /CNW/ - Today, representatives from major business, labour and health organizations announced their joint support for provincial smoke-free workplace legislation. The Alberta Chambers of Commerce, the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees joined several prominent health organizations to urge the Alberta government to protect all workers from secondhand smoke on the job.

"I can't think of any other issue that has drawn together this diverse number of organizations," said Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour. "The support for smoke-free workplace protection crosses many boundaries and this joint announcement sends a clear message to the Alberta government: It's time to protect all Albertans from secondhand smoke at work."

"The Alberta Chambers of Commerce has become increasingly concerned about the patchwork of municipal smoking bylaws across the province," said Ken Kobly, CEO of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. "We are asking the government to protect all employees by enacting uniform legislation prohibiting smoking in the workplace. This law would also level the playing field for businesses in every Alberta community."

"Our union has advocated for years to get smoking out of Alberta workplaces," said Doug Knight, president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. "Thousands of working Albertans continue to be exposed to secondhand smoke in their workplaces, and it will require a legislated ban on workplace smoking to protect all workers from this major occupational hazard and to avoid the associated lawsuits and Workers Compensation claims for not doing so."

"BOMA Edmonton supports a workplace smoking ban along with many other organizations because of the health and safety advantages of such a ban," said Percy Woods, executive vice-president of the Building Owners and Managers Association of Edmonton. "BOMA has developed a building certification program called Go Green that promotes improved indoor air quality. A provincial smoking ban would significantly improve indoor air quality in office buildings and would reduce maintenance and property damage associated with smoking."

"There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, especially for those with lung disease, allergies and heart disease," said Gina Smith, vice-president of The Lung Association. "Seven provinces and two territories have passed laws to protect almost all workers from secondhand smoke in public areas and workplaces. We encourage the Alberta government to take commensurate action on this important public health issue."

"Albertans do not have second class lungs and they deserve first class protection from secondhand smoke," said Dr. Roger Hodkinson, honorary chairman of Action on Smoking and Health. "Improving the quality of life of Albertans is one of the top priorities of the Stelmach government," said Hodkinson. "The Premier has mandated the health minister to improve the sustainability of the healthcare system and to promote wellness. The government can advance all of these

commendable objectives by protecting all Albertans from secondhand smoke at work."

The Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta is mobilizing its members to contact MLAs in support of smoke-free workplace protection. The Minister of Health and Wellness, Dave Hancock, is expected to present a legislative proposal to the government caucus in the near future.

An Ipsos-Reid survey commissioned by the Canadian Cancer Society last January revealed that four out of five Albertans support a province-wide ban on smoking in all workplaces, including restaurants, bars and gaming establishments. The survey found no difference in public support between rural and urban Albertans.

Smoke-free workplaces for all Albertans.

It's about health. It's about time.

For further information: Gil McGowan, AFL, at (780) 483-3021; Ken Kobly, Alberta Chambers of Commerce, at (780) 975-1659; Dennis Malayko, AUPE, at (780) 930-3362; Gina Smith, The Lung Association, at (780) 908-4291; Les Hagen, Action on Smoking and Health, at (780) 919-5546

---