

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

## - NEWS RELEASE -

WORLD NO-TOBACCO DAY -- THURSDAY, MAY 31, 2007

### **HEALTH COALITION WANTS TOBACCO BILL APPROVED THIS SPRING**

The Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta is delighted with today's Caucus decision in support of Health and Wellness Minister Hon. Dave Hancock's proposed comprehensive tobacco legislation. Based on this immediate and unprecedented development, the coalition is urging the Stelmach government to hold a final vote on the bill in the spring session of the Alberta Legislature.

This morning, the Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta delivered a letter to Premier Stelmach urging him to bring the bill forward for debate and a final vote before the end of the current sitting of the Assembly.

The coalition believes that effective tobacco legislation was subjected to years of dithering and indifference by the previous leadership and any further delay will continue to compromise the health of Albertans. The coalition is also concerned that the tobacco industry will take advantage of any legislative delay by attempting to undermine and derail the bill while it awaits final consideration. The tobacco industry has a deplorable track record of using delays to its advantage and utilizing its vast financial resources to influence and intimidate policy makers."

Ensuring that the popular tobacco proposals are passed in the spring session will demonstrate Premier's Stelmach's new approach in leadership and in taking decisive action to improve the quality of life of Albertans, while reducing health care costs.

"We commend Caucus for supporting a comprehensive tobacco control bill and we hope that the government will now act quickly and decisively to protect the health of Albertans," states Angeline Webb of the Canadian Cancer Society, "Tobacco is the leading avoidable cause of premature death in Alberta and I can't think of a more pressing issue that requires the government's immediate attention. Any further delay will add insult to the injury that thousands of Albertans have already suffered from the lack of action to date. The tobacco industry has a deplorable track record of using delays to its advantage and utilizing its vast financial resources to influence and intimidate policy makers."

Premier Stelmach sent a letter to the coalition in the final week of the Tory leadership race last fall pledging that we would "support and champion (my Caucuses') collective decision" as "part of an open and inclusive government".

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“Now is the time for Premier Stelmach to provide strong leadership on a fundamental quality of life issue” said Dr. Roger Hodkinson of Action on Smoking & Health. “The Premier promised to champion the collective decision of his Caucus and we hope that he will follow through on his commitment. This bill provides the Stelmach government with a golden opportunity to deliver on its mandate to improve the quality of life of Albertans”.

Based on its actions to date, the coalition is hopeful that the Stelmach government will not repeat the dithering, delay and indifference of the previous administration.

Alberta is one of few remaining provinces without comprehensive tobacco control legislation.

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