

HEALTH GROUPS URGE LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE TOBACCO USE

Monday, October 20, 2006

Today, the Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta launched a province-wide initiative to encourage the leadership candidates to support effective tobacco reduction measures.

The coalition is running compelling full page ads in major Alberta newspapers that convey the impact of tobacco use and list each candidate's response to a survey of proposed tobacco control policies.

To date, five of the eight official candidates have responded to the coalition's survey including Victor Doerksen, Dave Hancock, Mark Norris, Gary McPherson, and Lyle Oberg. Jim Dinning, Ted Morton and Ed Stelmach have not responded to the survey.

"Albertans want the next Premier to take strong action on the leading avoidable cause of premature death in our province" said spokesperson. "This campaign represents the wishes of the majority of Albertans who want to the government to take effective action on tobacco. If the leadership candidates are truly committed to improving the quality of life in Alberta, they cannot overlook the impact of tobacco use on individuals, families, communities and our healthcare system".

In addition to the newspaper ads, the coalition is urging thousands of supporters to participate in all-candidates forums and events around the province and to pose questions to the candidates about their intentions on tobacco if they become Premier.

Specifically, the coalition is urging the candidates to support the following policy measures:

- Legislation to make all indoor workplaces completely smoke-free, including liquor and gaming establishments.
- A tobacco tax increase of at least \$1.00 per pack of cigarettes.
- A ban on all retail tobacco displays or powerwalls.
- A ban on tobacco sales in pharmacies and other healthcare settings.
- Legislation to enable healthcare cost-recovery suits against tobacco companies

"Now is the time for Albertans to speak up for the quality of life in our province" said spokesperson. "We are urging everyone who has been touched by the tobacco epidemic to attend the leadership forums and to ask the candidates where they stand on the issue. We cannot allow the next Premier to overlook this enormous public health problem".

Over the next few weeks, coalition members will be meeting with various news media representatives around the province to discuss the relevance of tobacco reduction in the leadership debates. The coalition is committed to making tobacco reduction a significant leadership issue.

The coalition has posted all of the candidates' survey responses on its website at www.smokefreealberta.com and it will be posting any new responses as they are received.

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Key messages

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This campaign represents the wishes of the majority of Albertans who want to the government to take effective action on tobacco.

Now is the time for Albertans to speak up for the quality of life in our province. We are urging everyone who has been touched by the tobacco epidemic to attend the leadership forums and to ask the candidates where they stand on the issue

If the leadership candidates are truly committed to improving the quality of life in Alberta, they cannot overlook the impact of tobacco use on individuals, families, communities and our healthcare system.