

IT'S TIME FOR GOVERNMENT TO END THE HYPOCRISY AROUND ITS HEALTH AGENDA

MONTREAL, QC, May 30, 2016 -- On the eve of World No Tobacco Day, Imperial Tobacco Canada, Canada's largest tobacco company, calls on the government to end the hypocrisy around its health agenda. On one hand, the Federal government wants to move ahead with the legalization of marijuana and, on the other, it seeks to further regulate tobacco by banning menthol and introducing plain packaging.

“What’s the government’s end game when it comes to tobacco? Nobody disagrees with the virtues of regulating tobacco and yes, even the tobacco industry believes young people should not smoke. There are proven means to ensuring that young people do not smoke, take education programs for example,” said Eric Gagnon, Imperial Tobacco Canada’s Director of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs. “Yet, the government continues to concede to a small yet vocal group of health lobbyists who are more anti-industry than pro-health.”

The theme of this year’s World No Tobacco Day is ‘Get Ready for Plain Packaging’. The Trudeau government has made it clear that they intend to follow Australia, the UK and France’s lead by implementing plain packaging in Canada at some point in its mandate.

“Announcing more tobacco regulations is an easy political win that will generate headlines, but do nothing to further reduce smoking rates,” continued Gagnon. “Unsurprisingly, evidence from Australia shows plain packaging has not achieved any of its stated objectives. Canada will be no different. With products already hidden from view in stores and 75% of the pack covered with health warnings, nobody starts smoking because of the pack.”

The smoking rate in Canada is at an all-time low. Tobacco regulations in Canada are among the strictest in the world with retail display bans, three quarters of all cigarette packs already covered with graphic health warnings, no sponsorships, no advertising, governments suing tobacco companies to the tune of billions of dollars, the list goes on.

The health risks associated with smoking have been known for decades. It is for this reason that Imperial Tobacco Canada is not opposed to regulation that is solidly based in fact. However, punitive regulations that are based on emotion and false claims about industry tactics are not effective public policy.

“If the government is really serious about the health of Canadians, it should acknowledge the harm reduction potential of smokeless electronic nicotine products and table clear regulations around these products,” said Gagnon.

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