

OPP Anti-Contraband Task Force Step in the Right Direction

Ottawa - (January 25, 2016) Today, the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco (NCACT) welcomed the announcement of a new Contraband Tobacco Enforcement Team within the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

“With about 1 in 3 of all cigarettes purchased in the province being illegal, Ontario has the worst contraband tobacco problem in the country,” said Gary Grant, a 39-year veteran of the Toronto Police Service and national spokesperson for the NCACT. “It’s important that the government is putting words into action and creating a dedicated enforcement team to address this problem.”

The new team will be located within the OPP’s Organized Crime Enforcement Bureau, and will investigate the smuggling and trafficking of contraband tobacco. The new team will collaborate with other law enforcement agencies, including locally, nationally and internationally, to eliminate illegal cigarette networks in Ontario. NCACT has long called for such a team, including at pre-budget hearings this past Friday in Ottawa.

“Other provinces, such as, Quebec have shown that meaningful anti-contraband tobacco enforcement can have a real impact,” continued Grant. “Quebec’s Bill 59 and Acces Tabac program, which increased powers to local law enforcement agencies and provided them with the resources they need to investigate illegal tobacco, reduced contraband levels by about 50%. That has left more money in the provincial treasury and less in the pockets of organized crime.”

The RCMP estimates that there are about 175 organized crime groups involved in the illegal cigarette trade. They use the profits from cigarette smuggling to finance their other illegal activities, including guns, drugs and human smuggling. The contraband tobacco trade is fueled by 50 illegal cigarette factories, based mostly in Ontario and Quebec, each of which can produce as many as 10,000 cigarettes a minute.

“Today’s announcement is another important step towards addressing contraband tobacco in Ontario, but is certainly not the last one,” concluded Grant. “It will be important for the government to monitor the success of this enforcement team to ensure that it has the resources it needs to be effective, while also continuing to explore other contraband control measures, including public education campaigns and stronger regulation of cigarette manufacturing materials.”

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About NCACT

The National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco is a Canadian advocacy group formed with the participation of businesses, organizations and individuals concerned about the growing danger of contraband cigarettes. NCACT members share the goals of working together to educate people and urge government to take quick action to stop this growing threat.

The members of the NCACT are: Association des détaillants en alimentation du Québec (ADA), Association des marchands dépanneurs et épiciers du Québec (AMDEQ), Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Convenience Stores Association (CCSA), Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers Council, Conseil du patronat du Québec (CPQ), Customs and Immigration Union, Échec au crime Québec, Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ), Frontier Duty Free Association (FDFA), National Convenience Stores Distributors Association (NACDA), Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Retail Council of Canada, Toronto Crime Stoppers, United Korean Commerce and Industry Association (UKCIA), and National Capital Area Crime Stoppers.

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