

Ontario Approach to Marijuana Adopts Unused Contraband Tobacco Best Practices

Ottawa – (September 8, 2017) Today, the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco (NCACT) highlighted that Ontario’s proposed new Marijuana sales and enforcement policy includes actions it should have taken to address contraband tobacco long ago. In particular, the province is proposing a coordinated strategy to address illegal distribution and has recognized how price impacts illicit sales. It is important that the province recognize that all contraband sales must be addressed, not just marijuana.

“Ontario’s proposed marijuana retail regime proposes actions and policies that have long been needed to address contraband tobacco, but that they have not pursued,” said Gary Grant, the National Spokesperson for the NCACT, and a 39-year veteran of the Toronto Police Service. “Notably, the province has committed to a marijuana enforcement summit and regime that would include municipal, provincial and federal authorities, with consideration for resources needed, exactly what is missing to combat illegal tobacco.”

Ontario has the worst contraband tobacco market in Canada, with more than 1 in 3 cigarettes sold in the province being illegal, a rate that has barely budged for several years. In Northern Ontario, the contraband rate is almost 60%. Illegal cigarettes are cheap and readily available costing as little as \$8 for a baggie of 200 cigarettes, \$70 or more less than legal product. They are available directly from smugglers or hundreds of unlicensed retail smoke shacks. The RCMP has identified 175 criminal gangs involved in the contraband trade, which use the revenues to fund guns, drugs and human smuggling.

“In approaching the “new” marijuana challenge, Ontario is recognizing the value of available tools it has consistently not pursued for its contraband tobacco problem,” continued Grant. “Quebec’s enforcement approach, which empowers and provides resources to local police, has reduced illegal cigarettes by half in Quebec, and seems similar to what Ontario proposes for marijuana, but has not adopted for tobacco in any other province. There’s no reason that this should be the case.”

Quebec’s combination of increased enforcement tools and dedicated support for local police through the Acces Tabac program has seen their contraband tobacco incidence decline to about 15%. Meanwhile, the province has indicated that these efforts have yielded an additional \$180 million in provincial revenues in 2015-2016.

“Ontario would be wise to heed its own advice on addressing future contraband marijuana challenges for its existing contraband tobacco problem,” concluded Grant. “Dedicated enforcement works, and new challenges should not distract attention from long-standing ones.”

“Minister Naqvi put illegal pot shop owners that they are ‘on notice’ today; we wish that the same warning was made to the criminals in the contraband tobacco trade.””

- 30 -

To arrange interviews with Mr. Grant, please contact:

Michael Powell, NCACT Public Affairs
Telephone: 1-866-950-5551 (office) 613-797-7313(cell)
Email: info@stopcontrabandtobacco.ca

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. Please visit: www.stopcontrabandtobacco.ca to learn more.

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.