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## **ASH URGES ALLAN ROCK TO ENDORSE YOUTH TOBACCO BILL**

**Edmonton** - Action on Smoking & Health is urging federal health minister Alan Rock to endorse Bill S-15, the Tobacco Youth Protection Act sponsored by Ontario senator Colin Kenny. If passed, the bill would create a \$360 million foundation to fight youth smoking in Canada through a 19 cent per pack levy on tobacco companies.

ASH issued the challenge at a Senate committee hearing on Bill S-15 held today in Edmonton. A Senate committee chaired by Senator Nick Taylor is holding hearings on the bill in major Canadian cities over the next two weeks.

"Bill S-15 would transform Canada's tobacco reduction effort by creating a world-class prevention program that is based upon available evidence and best practices" said Dr. Roger Hodgkinson, honorary chairman. "For the sake of future generations of would-be smokers, we urge Allan Rock to endorse this bill in its entirety" he added. "The answer to the youth smoking problem is staring the Minister in the face and we hope that he will respond accordingly".

ASH believes that the Minister's recent announcement of increased funding for tobacco reduction will not substantially reduce youth smoking. The federal government's performance targets fall far short of outcomes that are being achieved in other North American jurisdictions. California, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Florida are achieving record-setting declines in tobacco use through comprehensive strategies that are funded to the tune of \$7 to \$15 per capita. Elements of these strategies include mass media campaigns, smoking bans, tobacco tax increases, school and community-based programs, enforcement and effective stop-smoking initiatives. Bill S-15 is modeled after these comprehensive strategies.

"We congratulate Senator Kenny for bringing this issue to the fore and for his unwavering determination in protecting the health of young Canadians" said Les Hagen, executive director. "Senator Kenny has been a source of tremendous inspiration to those of us who are fighting in the trenches of tobacco control and we are hoping for the speedy passage of his bill" he added.

Action on Smoking & Health is Western Canada's leading health organization devoted to tobacco control and prevention.

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