

ASH ACTION ON SMOKING & HEALTH	News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE	Friday, June 8, 2001

SASKATCHEWAN TOBACCO BILL PUTS ALBERTA AT THE BACK OF THE PACK

As the result of a new tobacco bill that was introduced today by the Saskatchewan government, Alberta is the only remaining Canadian province without legislation to control tobacco sales and marketing. The Saskatchewan bill bans the retail display and promotion of tobacco products, increases penalties for retailers selling tobacco to children, and prohibits smoking in enclosed public places accessible to children.

ASH is urging the Alberta government to reverse its track record on tobacco by introducing comprehensive legislation to control tobacco sales and marketing. With the passage of Saskatchewan's bill, nine provinces and all 50 U.S. states have adopted legislation to control tobacco sales and marketing.

"Tobacco companies have been given free reign to undermine public health in Alberta" said Dr. Roger Hodkinson, honorary chairman. "Provincial legislation is needed now to reverse decades of neglect in protecting Alberta kids from tobacco companies", he added. "Why are we sheltering an out-of-province industry whose products kill 3,400 Albertans annually? Even tobacco-producing jurisdictions like Quebec, Ontario, Virginia, and Kentucky have passed legislation to restrict tobacco marketing practices."

The Canadian tobacco industry's deliberate targeting of youth is now a matter of public record. A litany of internal documents released through various court actions has revealed the industry's ongoing efforts to target youth. Many of these documents can be found at www.tobaccopapers.org, including Imperial Tobacco's infamous Project 16. This odious marketing strategy included the collection of market research data on adolescents as young as 12 years of age.

Alberta Health and Wellness Minister Gary Mar has called for meaningful government action to reduce tobacco use, including provincial legislation. An interdepartmental committee led by the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission is currently developing recommendations for the government's consideration. A formal announcement is anticipated within the next few weeks.

A full listing of provincial tobacco laws can be found at www.ncth.ca/CCTCLAWweb.nsf.

The new Saskatchewan bill can be viewed at <http://www.gov.sk.ca/newsrel/govnr.htm>.

CONTACT: Les Hagen at 780-919-5546 Dr. Roger Hodkinson at 780-433-1131 (work) or 780-432-0898 (home)