

ASH NEWS RELEASE

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TOBACCO TAX INCREASE COULD CUT YOUTH SMOKING IN HALF

Premier Klein's statements regarding the potential for a \$1 to \$3 tax increase on cigarette taxes could reduce youth smoking by 50 percent, according to ASH. The Premier made the remarks to journalists who were assembled today at the Legislature. The final amount of the increase is expected to be determined at a Caucus meeting tomorrow morning.

Evidence indicates that every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes will reduce tobacco consumption among youth by 6%-12%. A three dollar per pack increase would represent a 60% increase in the price of cigarettes, resulting in a decline of 36% to 72% in youth tobacco use.

"The Alberta government could cut youth smoking rates in half if it increases cigarette taxes by \$3 per pack" said Les Hagen, executive director. "Tobacco tax increases are one of the most effective tools to reduce tobacco use particularly among youth", he added. "We urge the Alberta government to demonstrate its commitment to the health of Albertans by introducing a \$3 per pack increase on cigarettes" Hagen added.

Provincial taxes on cigarettes are presently \$1.75 per pack of 25. Alberta has the third lowest tobacco taxes in Canada and the lowest in Western Canada. Per-capita cigarette consumption in Alberta is 50% higher than British Columbia where tobacco taxes are substantially higher.

"The Alberta government has lots of room to move on tobacco taxes and we hope that it will do the right thing", Hagen added. "The time has come to prevent the spread of the tobacco epidemic to future generations".

One in every five deaths in Alberta is the direct result of tobacco use. Tobacco is the province's number one preventable public health problem, killing over 3,400 Albertans annually. About 10,000 teenagers start smoking each year in the province.

Action on Smoking & Health is Western Canada's leading tobacco control organization.

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