

## ASH NEWS RELEASE

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### TOBACCO TAX INCREASE A HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT

ASH is calling today's tobacco tax increase a remarkable and historic achievement for public health in Alberta. Effective midnight tonight, cigarette taxes will rise by **\$18/per carton** of 200 and loose tobacco will increase by **\$24/per tub** of 200 grams. This increase represents the largest tobacco tax hike in Canadian history.

"This tobacco tax increase will go down in the history books as one of the most significant public health achievements in our province", predicted Les Hagen, executive director. "In one fell swoop, Alberta has gone from the back of the pack to the **front/leader** of the pack when compared with other provinces" he added. "We expect this increase to have a dramatic effect upon tobacco use, especially among adolescents. This is a very proud moment for public health in Alberta".

Based on published economic formulas, ASH is projecting that about **40,000** Alberta smokers will quit smoking as the result of the tax increase, representing up to **20,000** premature deaths avoided. The increase is expected to reduce adult per-capita consumption by at least **10%** and youth consumption will drop by **20% to 40%**.

"We applaud the Alberta government for taking meaningful action to improve the health of Albertans", said Dr. Roger Hodkinson, honorary chair. "Future generations of non-smokers will be the primary beneficiaries of today's tax increase. Words cannot adequately describe our elation with today's budget announcement".

ASH is also delighted with the government's decision to equalize tax rates on all tobacco products, including loose and smokeless tobacco. Alberta has an elevated rate of smokeless tobacco use that can be largely attributed to low tax levels.

Tobacco is the leading avoidable cause of illness, disability, and premature death in Alberta. One in every five deaths results from tobacco use, representing 3,400 premature deaths each year. About 600,000 Albertans are regular smokers.

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

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