

- NEWS RELEASE -

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**ALBERTA UNIVERSITIES RECEIVE UNHEALTHY MARKS
ON TOBACCO FUNDING**

Following the televised exposé of tobacco industry funding at the University of Alberta, ASH is releasing a report card of tobacco funding policies at all of Alberta's publicly-funded post-secondary institutions.

Out of 22 institutions, one received a 'B', one received a "C", 19 received a "D" and one received an "F".

The University of Alberta received an "F" for accepting millions of dollars of tobacco industry funding for health research, contracts and scholarships and for investing two million dollars in tobacco company stocks.

Bow Valley College received the highest grade of 'B' because of their policy against accepting any gift donations from tobacco companies.

The University of Lethbridge received a "C" for its policy of refusing to invest in tobacco company stocks. However the university has no policy on accepting industry funding.

"Tobacco has no place in higher learning" said Les Hagen, executive director. "The exposé of the University of Alberta's acceptance of major funding from tobacco companies is alarming and we hope to close the door on this questionable activity. Tobacco companies have a long and dubious track record of exploiting post-secondary institutions for commercial gain and Alberta campuses are not immune".

ASH is sending registered letters to the presidents of all of the post-secondary institutions urging them to approve policies rejecting all forms of tobacco industry funding and investments.

"We are very concerned with the University of Alberta's relationship with the tobacco industry" said Hagen continued, "We need to ensure that this practice does not spread to other post-secondary institutions".

Tobacco companies have been providing funding to post-secondary institutions to enhance their corporate reputations, to cloud the science about the health risks of tobacco use, to help commercialize their products, and to gain legitimacy and credibility.

“Publicly-funded post-secondary institutions should not be selling their credibility to the tobacco industry and they should not be involved directly or indirectly with the commercialization of tobacco. Tobacco is the single most important cause of disease, disability and premature death in Canada. It is impossible to justify tobacco industry funding against the gruesome backdrop of human misery resulting from tobacco use” Hagen added.

Tobacco kills 37,000 Canadians annually, representing one in every five deaths. Tobacco has no safe level of consumption, is highly addictive, and kills when used exactly as intended by its manufacturers.

Several Canadian universities have approved policies rejecting tobacco industry investments including the University of Toronto, McGill University and the University of Lethbridge.

As of January 1, 2009 tobacco sales will be prohibited in all post-secondary institutions in Alberta as the final phase of the Tobacco Reduction Act takes effect.

The recent three-part exposé of tobacco industry funding at the University of Alberta can be viewed at:

Clip 1: http://cbc.ca/edmonton/media/video/newsatsix/20081121SMOKE_1_realplayer_1.ram

Clip 2: http://cbc.ca/edmonton/media/video/newsatsix/20081121SMOKE_2_realplayer_1.ram

Clip 3: http://cbc.ca/edmonton/media/video/newsatsix/20081121SMOKE_3_realplayer_1.ram

Real player is needed to view these clips. It can be downloaded for free at <http://www.realplayer.com/>.

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