

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Anti-Contraband Spokesperson Condemns the Federal Government for Making Legal Packaging Same as Illegal

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, Ottawa, Ontario- Today, Gary Grant, the National Spokesperson for the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco (NCACT), condemned the Federal Government for moving ahead with plain and standardized packaging, despite clear examples internationally of increases in illicit tobacco due to similar policies. The regulations will begin to come into force on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

“The Federal Government continues to take actions to curb smoking rates in Canada, while at the same time ignoring the increasing trade of illegal tobacco. While we appreciate the government’s goals of driving down tobacco use to 5% of the Canadian population by 2035, this will not be possible without addressing the black market.” stated Gary Grant, a 39-year veteran of the Toronto Police Service and founder of Toronto Crime Stoppers.

The original Act which brought forward the new Tobacco Products Regulations (Plain and Standardized Appearance) did not include any mention of standardized packaging. Research over the past months by the NCACT have shown that over 75% of packaging on the legal side of one type, while 75% of packaging on the illegal side are another type.

“The government has moved forward with standardizing packaging and the products inside the packs which will force legal tobacco manufacturers to change their packaging to that which the illegal manufacturers use. While counterfeit tobacco is not currently an issue in Canada, we are confident that illegal manufacturers will begin to produce packaging which looks identical to the legal brands. This will not only cause confusion amongst smokers, but law enforcement will no longer be able to clear identify the illegal product.” continued Grant.

Contraband tobacco continues to be major issue in Canada, with recent estimates showing that governments lose more than \$2 billion to the illicit trade, which goes directly to fund organized crime groups other activities, which includes drugs, guns and human trafficking. The RCMP estimates that there are more than 175 organized crime groups involved in contraband tobacco, sourcing the product from more than 50 illegal factories.

“We envision two possible scenarios following November 9<sup>th</sup>: Either illegal manufacturers will keep all the colours and decals on their packaging, enticing smokers to purchase their products, or they will adopt plain packaging which will begin a counterfeit market in Canada. Either way, the federal government has failed in including anything in the new regulations which would address illegal tobacco and the organized crime groups that continue to act with impunity.” concluded Grant.

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*The National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco is a Canadian advocacy group formed by organizations and associations concerned about the growing danger of contraband cigarettes. NCACT members share the goals of working together to educate people and urge government to take quick action to stop this growing threat. More information about the Coalition can be found on our website, [www.stopcontrabandtobacco.ca](http://www.stopcontrabandtobacco.ca).*

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