

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coalition Against Illegal Tobacco Responds to Ontario's Fall Economic Statement

November 6th, 2019 – Toronto, Ontario – Today, Ron Bell, the National Spokesperson for the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco (NCACT) responded to the release of Ontario's Fall Economic Statement.

"While the Fall Economic Statement does not follow up on specific actions listed in the 2018 Fall Economic Statement, we are encouraged to see that the government will be consulting with stakeholders on how to address this growing issue. The need to take action now is even greater as the Federal Government begins implementing plain packaging which will make it more difficult for law enforcement and the public to identify illegal tobacco," stated Bell, a 30-year veteran of the Winnipeg Police Service and recent lead of the Manitoba contraband tobacco enforcement team.

According to the Government of Ontario's EY report released in 2018, the province loses over \$750 million in provincial excise tax revenue to illegal tobacco. The lost funds go directly to gangs involved in the illicit trade who use the proceeds to fund other illegal activities, such as the sale and distribution of guns and drugs.

"Ontario continues to be the epicentre of the illegal tobacco trade, with one in three cigarettes sold being contraband. Quebec had the same problem prior to 2009, however implemented specific actions which allowed them to lower their rate of contraband tobacco by 50 percent within two years. In their last budget, they announced an increase in revenue due to action of over \$200 million," continued Bell.

In Ontario's 2018 Fall Economic Statement, the government listed actions that were similar to the actions that Quebec continues to take against illegal tobacco. This includes bolstering the contraband tobacco enforcement team, creating a funding agency, and allowing all police officers to enforce contraband tobacco.

"We look forward to working with the Ontario Government, Minister Rod Phillips and other stakeholders in addressing this growing issue. Through targeted actions, we can take an important funding source away from gangs and put funds back into the public treasury while helping to make our communities safer," concluded Bell.

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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.

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