



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kenora-Rainy River Deemed the Gateway of Contraband Tobacco

June 4th, 2020 – Today, Ron Bell, the National Spokesperson for the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco (NCACT) and a 30-year veteran of the Winnipeg Police Service deemed the Ontario area of Kenora-Rainy River as the Gateway of Contraband Tobacco.

“Kenora-Rainy River has always been known as the Gateway of Contraband Tobacco to western provinces in the law enforcement community combatting contraband tobacco. All of the illegal cigarettes seized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta are driven through the area and are usually sourced from southwestern Ontario.” began Bell.

Over the past two months, multiple seizures of contraband tobacco have taken place in the region. Seizures on April 30th, May 10th, May 16th, May 26th and June 3rd seized over \$1.3 million worth of illegal cigarettes heading westbound through Kenora-Rainy River to Manitoba and other western provinces. The majority, if not all, of the illegal product is sourced from southwestern Ontario.

“Ontario continues to be the epicentre of Canada’s contraband tobacco problem. With one in three cigarettes sold being illegal and the government losing over \$750 million in provincial excise tax, it is clear that organized crime groups continue to act with near impunity. This is having a real impact on every Canadian province, from Newfoundland to Alberta.” continued Bell.

The average market share of contraband tobacco across Ontario is approximately 33%, with rates rising as high as 60 to 70% in some areas of northern Ontario. The Government of Ontario’s EY Report commissioned in the fall of 2018 found that the government is losing over \$750 million in province excise tax to the illicit trade, combined with the federal excise tax losses, the total is over \$1 billion.

“Organized crime groups are making millions of dollars off contraband tobacco, which they use for other illicit trades, such as the distribution and sale of illegal cannabis, cocaine and human trafficking. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic these groups continue to transport and sell their illegal products from Ontario across Canada. We urge the Member of Provincial Parliament for Kenora-Rainy River, Greg Rickford, to meet with us to learn more about how his constituency is the Gateway for Contraband Tobacco. He should lead his government to take action as soon as possible in order to stop organized crime and return proceeds to the public treasury.” 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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