

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Ontario Continuing to Ignore Criminal Gangs Funding Sources

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – The National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco's (NCACT) responded to Premier Doug Ford's announcement this week regarding the Government of Ontario's investment of \$75.1 million to reinforce the fight against gun and gang violence.

"While we commend the government for continuing to make investments in combating gun and gang violence, without any action against criminal gangs funding sources, they will continue to grow across the province," began Gary Grant, National Spokesperson for the NCACT.

The Government of Ontario estimates that it loses over \$750 million a year in lost tobacco taxes to criminal gangs selling illegal cigarettes. These proceeds are used by these organized crime groups to fund other illicit activities, such as guns, drugs and human trafficking. Ontario also continues to be the worst province for contraband tobacco, which accounts for over \$12 billion in annual costs according to Criminal Intelligence Service Canada.

"Criminal gangs are making over a million dollars a day selling illegal cigarettes in Ontario, yet the government still has not taken the actions that it listed in its 2018 Fall Economic Statement. Law enforcement in the province needs the tools to be successful like they have been in Quebec since 2009," continued Grant.

Prior to 2009, Quebec had the same contraband tobacco problem as Ontario, where one in three cigarettes sold continue to be illegal. By creating a dedicated taskforce, funding ongoing contraband tobacco investigations, and allowing all police officers to investigate illegal cigarettes, they were able to reduce their contraband rate from 33% to below 15% within a few years.

"Quebec continues to lead the way in Canada on contraband tobacco enforcement. However, without action in Ontario, criminal gangs are transporting more illegal cigarettes by the day across the province and the country. It's time for the government to take action so that Ontario is no longer the Canadian epicentre for this illicit product." 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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