

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coalition Recognizes World No Contraband Tobacco Day

May 31st, 2023 (Toronto, Ontario) – In recognition of World No Tobacco Day, the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco's Executive Director, Rick Barnum, urged action by the federal government and provincial governments on contraband tobacco.

"While goals set by governments to reduce smoking rates are admirable, they will not be achieved without taking action against the illegal market," began Barnum. "Illegal cigarettes continue to be readily available across the country and contravening all tobacco cessation measures."

The federal government has set itself a national target of reaching less than 5% tobacco use by 2035 and has implemented multiple measures to reach this goal, including taxation increases and plain packaging. Unfortunately, contraband tobacco ignores all tobacco control measures, including continuing to have colourful and attractive packaging which Health Canada has noted attracts smokers.

"Ontario continues to be the epicentre of the contraband tobacco trade, with one in three cigarettes sold being illegal. If any government wants to reduce smoking rates within their jurisdiction, they must take concerted action against illegal cigarettes and the criminal gangs that sell them," continued Barnum.

The Government of Ontario has reported that it loses over \$750 million a year to contraband tobacco. Nationally, this figure is estimated at over \$2 billion in lost excise and tobacco taxes. These proceeds go directly to organized crime groups who are also involved in guns, drugs, and human trafficking.

"Action is needed by both the federal government and provincial governments to address contraband tobacco. By supporting coordination efforts and bolstering law enforcement action, Canada can ensure that it ceases to be known globally as a hub for contraband tobacco," concluded Barnum.

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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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