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APR 23 2015

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Dr. Stuart Kreisman
Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada
134 Caroline
Ottawa ON K1Y 0S9

Dear Dr. Kreisman:

Thank you for your email of March 16, 2015, in which Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada advocates for issues such as banning sales of tobacco in pharmacies, divesting of tobacco stock holdings, protection from smoke in multi-unit dwellings, management of cigarette litter and retail reform.

I appreciate your support for the new legislation that restricts the retail sale and promotion of electronic cigarettes to youth and established restrictions on tobacco and electronic cigarette use on health authority property. BC has, for many years, used a comprehensive approach to tobacco control and our strong suite of tobacco control programs has helped us maintain the lowest rate of tobacco use in Canada. (Please note that the 2013 smoking prevalence rate for BC has not increased from the previous year level in the Canadian Community Health Survey. The increase from 2012 to 2013 is not statistically significant).

The smoke-free outdoor protections in the *Tobacco Control Act* provide a solid baseline of protection that communities in BC can exceed as they are ready. Many communities have increased that baseline, as you have noted, as they believe their communities are ready to support and enforce such initiatives.

BC does not ban the sale of tobacco in pharmacies and we know of no evidence that such a ban decreases tobacco use. It is important to note that in the other provinces that ban tobacco sales in stores that contain a dispensary, tobacco sales can move to another part of the store site as long as the door is separate from the one to the area with the dispensary. In a Costco store, for example, tobacco sales have moved to a separate room, where they sell tires. A large grocery store with a dispensary could move sales to a gas bar. Businesses continued to sell tobacco, just from a nearby area of the business.

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BC's approach is to allow pharmacies to choose to end the sale of tobacco products rather than banning the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies and stores containing a dispensary. Most pharmacies (55 percent) in BC are not selling tobacco today.^[1]

On the matter of investment in tobacco companies, the BC Investment Management Corporation operates at arm's length from government therefore; government cannot direct the Corporation's investments.

As you know, smoking in public and workplace areas within multi-unit dwellings is banned through the *Tobacco Control Act*. While Government does not plan to ban smoking within the private units of condominiums and apartments, funding has been provided to develop and continue Smoke Free Housing BC, which encourages the smoke free housing throughout BC. BC Housing has also established smoke free buildings.

You may wish to contact the Ministry of Environment with your suggestion for a deposit return for cigarette filters. They are responsible for the Recycling Regulation. I also appreciate your suggestions for improvements to the retail sale of tobacco.

British Columbia continues to be a strong leader in tobacco control. In your letter, you did not mention that the province has raised the tobacco tax three times since April 2013; keeping a high price for tobacco can be an incentive for youth to avoid tobacco and encourage smokers to quit. Also, the Smoking Cessation Program is a unique made-in-BC investment by the provincial government to help smokers quit by providing access to free nicotine replacement therapies for all smokers and, for those on eligible Pharmacare plans, prescription medication. British Columbia was the first to offer such a broad based program in Canada, and since its inception, there have been over 323,000 orders for nicotine replacement therapy.

I appreciate your suggestions for continuing to support British Columbians in being smoke-free.

Sincerely,



Terry Lake
Minister

^[1] <http://www.cleanaircoalitionbc.com/uploads/2012/01/120116-Backgrounder-Tobacco-Free-Pharmacies-FINAL.pdf>