

MEDIA RELEASE

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Health organizations appeal again for tobacco-free pharmacies in BC

Vancouver, BC – On May 31st, British Columbia will have the unflattering distinction of being the lone province in Canada to still allow the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies and venues containing pharmacies. On this date, coinciding with World No Tobacco Day, Manitoba becomes the ninth province to ban the sale of tobacco in pharmacies.

Health care advocates encourage the provincial government to make this a key priority and make BC pharmacies tobacco-free.

“The provincial government has taken an inspired approach to dealing with other tobacco control issues by banning smoking in vehicles where children are present and supporting one of the most expansive and generous Smoking Cessation Programs in Canada,” commented Scott McDonald, CEO of the BC Lung Association. “However, BC has lagged behind every other Canadian jurisdiction in the area of tobacco-free pharmacies”.

“In recent polling done by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, more than 73% of British Columbian’s support tobacco-free pharmacies,” noted Diego Marchese, CEO, BC & Yukon of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. “That is tremendous support for a policy that would see BC coming up to the same standard as the rest of Canada.”

“Pharmacists provide expert advice every day to people who are thinking of quitting or are having a hard time resisting the temptation of tobacco. But sometimes in order to access the expert advice from the pharmacist in the back of the store, you need to walk past the temptation of tobacco sales happening at the front of it,” added Bev Harris, Vice-Chair of the College of Pharmacists of BC. “We have long been supporters of legislation that would finally put an end to this conflict.”

The BC Medical Association and the Canadian Cancer Society, BC & Yukon are also supportive of the move to make BC pharmacies tobacco-free and have advocated for years to see such a policy in place.

Dr. Lloyd Oppel, Chair of the Council on Health Promotion at the BC Medical Association notes, “We should all be doing everything we can to prevent children and youth from smoking in the first place and make it easier for people who do smoke to quit. Removing tobacco products from pharmacies has shown to be an effective barrier to smoking and is one more step in reinforcing our collective goal of making British Columbia a healthy province.”

Collectively, the health organizations believe that with more than 6,000 retail outlets that sell tobacco products in BC, removing tobacco products from pharmacies is a good and sensible start to reducing supply, which in and of itself can be an effective deterrent to smoking.

Each year in British Columbia 6,000 people die from tobacco-related causes and these deaths are entirely preventable.

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