

Improving Albertans' quality of life

May 31, 2007

Government approves province-wide smoking ban in public places

Legislation proposed to ban tobacco retail displays, sales in pharmacies

Edmonton... Proposed legislation will ban smoking in all public places in Alberta, as well as prohibit tobacco product displays in retail outlets and tobacco sales in pharmacies.

The *Tobacco Reduction Act* will prohibit smoking in all public places and workplaces. Other changes proposed under the legislation will ban tobacco power walls and other promotional displays in retail outlets. Tobacco products will no longer be permitted for sale in pharmacies, public colleges and universities.

"Support for this legislation makes this an historic day in Alberta, especially as we celebrate World No Tobacco Day," said Dave Hancock, Minister of Health and Wellness. "The health of Albertans, particularly our young people, is paramount in this proposed legislation. Sadly, every year 3,400 Albertans lose their life from tobacco related causes."

The *Tobacco Reduction Act* would amend the *Smoke-free Places Act* that prohibits smoking in public places accessible to minors.

"The proposals under the *Tobacco Reduction Act* will strengthen our efforts to protect Albertans from the dangers of second-hand smoke and reduce overall tobacco use," said Minister Hancock. "While smoking remains an individual choice, this legislation is intended to help reduce the long-term health and human costs associated with tobacco use. This legislation will help us create a healthier population and build a more sustainable health care system."

If passed by the Alberta Legislative Assembly, Alberta will join the majority of provinces which prohibit smoking in all public places and workplaces. A number of provinces have enacted legislation that bans visual displays of tobacco products, as well as legislation that prohibits tobacco sales in pharmacies, schools and health care facilities.

A tobacco tax increase was included in the 2007 provincial budget in an effort to reduce smoking and promote a healthier lifestyle. On April 19, tobacco taxes increased by 16 per cent in an effort to reduce smoking and promote a healthier lifestyle. The tax on a carton of cigarettes rose by \$5 to \$37.

Protection from second-hand smoke and actions to reduce tobacco use supports Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to improve Albertans' quality of life. Other priorities for the government are to: govern with integrity and transparency, manage growth pressures, build a stronger Alberta and provide safe and secure communities.

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Media enquiries may be directed to:

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Backgrounder

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Tobacco Reduction Act proposals

Prohibit smoking in all public places and workplaces

The legislation removes the exceptions provision in the *Smoke-free Places Act* which allows for smoking in designated smoking rooms and public workplaces that exclude minors.

The *Tobacco Reduction Act* also prohibits smoking within a prescribed distance from windows and doorways of those places where smoking is prohibited under the Act to protect indoor air quality.

Ban power walls and other tobacco retail displays and promotion

The *Tobacco Reduction Act* prohibits the display, advertising and promotion of tobacco products at the retail level.

Prohibit the sale of tobacco products in designated places, including pharmacies

Prohibit the sale of tobacco from health care facilities, and university campuses

Tobacco tax increase

On April 19, tobacco taxes increased by 16 per cent in an effort to reduce smoking and promote a healthier lifestyle. The tax on a carton of cigarettes rose by \$5 to \$37.

Tobacco use statistics

- Every year 3,400 Albertans die from tobacco-related causes - 100 per cent preventable.
- The province spends about \$471 million annually on health care costs directly attributed to tobacco use.
- Costs due to lost productivity, fires, and property damage are estimated at \$1.8 billion annually.
- The vast majority of smokers become smokers before they turn 18.
- 80 per cent of Albertans support a smoking ban in all workplaces and public places.

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