
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2006HEALTH0058-001124
Sept. 15, 2006

Ministry of Health
Ministry of Attorney General

B.C. WINS FOREIGN TOBACCO SUIT

VANCOUVER – The B.C. Court of Appeal has ruled unanimously in favour of the Province of British Columbia holding that the B.C. courts have jurisdiction over foreign tobacco companies named in B.C.’s health-care costs recovery action.

“This is a great victory,” said Health Minister George Abbott. “The decision means that the multinational industry is not immune from lawsuits by the provinces to recover our health-care costs. B.C. is holding the tobacco industry accountable for its deceptive marketing practices that harmed so many British Columbians.”

“This victory means that foreign tobacco companies named as defendants in the lawsuit, as well as their Canadian affiliates, will now be required to answer allegations of wrongdoing in the courts of British Columbia,” said Attorney General Wally Oppal.

The Province alleges that these multinational foreign tobacco companies conspired with the Canadian tobacco manufacturers to deceive the public about the health risks and addictive properties of cigarettes.

The Province further alleges wrongdoing in the sale of tobacco products in B.C. through:

- failing to provide an appropriate warning to people who began smoking in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s;
- targeting children in marketing and advertising;
- claiming “light” cigarettes were safer than regular cigarettes when the manufacturers knew they were not;
- suppressing research on the risks of smoking; and
- undermining public warnings on the risks of smoking.

In its lawsuit, the Province is pursuing compensation in the billions of dollars for health-care expenditures that resulted from the tobacco industry’s concealment of the hazards of using tobacco products.

B.C. has the lowest prevalence of smoking among Canadians age 15 and older. Despite these encouraging trends, close to 6,000 British Columbians continue to die every year from tobacco-related illnesses.

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