

David Tilson MP ? Government is working on combatting contraband tobacco



Canadians elected our government with a strong mandate to keep our children and communities safe.

We have delivered numerous measures to meet this goal by promoting healthy choices, standing up for victims of crime, protecting the most vulnerable members of our communities and holding criminals accountable for their actions. As indicated in the Speech from the Throne, there is still more to be done to keep our communities safe and we remain committed to this goal.

Our government is building on our efforts by taking action against the cross-border trafficking and smuggling of contraband tobacco. Strong action to combat contraband tobacco is important to protecting the gains we have made in reducing smoking among Canadians, particularly young Canadians. Smoking rates from youth aged 15 to 17 are at an all-time low and we are building on this momentum to help ensure our youth live smoke-free.

Our government is introducing new legislation to make trafficking contraband tobacco a new Criminal Code offence. The proposed amendment includes the sale, offer for sale, possession for the purpose of sale, transportation, distribution or delivery of contraband tobacco.

This legislation also includes mandatory penalties of imprisonment for repeat offenders where a high volume of tobacco products is involved. The mandatory minimum penalties on indictment for repeat offenders would be set at 90 days incarceration on a second conviction, 180 days incarceration on third conviction and two years less a day on subsequent convictions. With this legislation, we are holding offenders accountable for their crimes and we are giving law enforcement agencies the necessary tools to combat tobacco trafficking.

This legislation builds on our government's previous action to prevent Canada's youth from smoking. We introduced the Cracking Down on Tobacco Marketing Aimed at Youth Act, which prohibits the sale of flavoured cigarettes, little cigars and blunt wraps, as well as extends restrictions on tobacco advertising. We also made significant changes to Tobacco Products Labelling Regulations to include larger health warnings and visible health resources.

Tobacco use continues to be the most preventable cause of premature death in Canada. Unfortunately, contraband tobacco makes it easier for Canadian youth to get their hands on it and leads to unhealthy smoking habits. In addition to serious health concerns, contraband tobacco fuels organized crime, illegal drugs, and guns in our communities.

Contraband tobacco has no place in our communities and this legislation is an important step in combatting contraband tobacco, as well as keeping tobacco out of the hands of our youth. Our government will continue to take strong action to keep our children and communities safe.