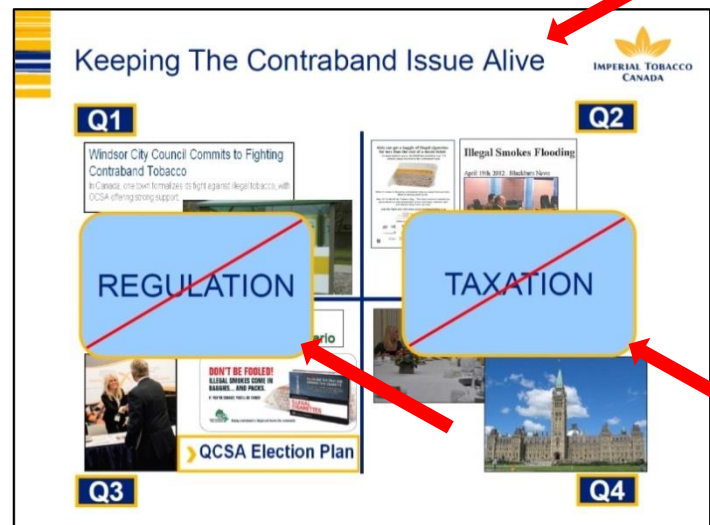


# Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control Non-Smokers' Rights Association Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada

## A LEAKED DOCUMENT FROM IMPERIAL TOBACCO SHOWS HOW THE CANADIAN CONVENIENCE STORES ASSOCIATION AND ITS AFFILIATE WERE USED AS FRONT GROUPS TO BLOCK HEALTH REGULATIONS AND TOBACCO TAXES

**Ottawa & Montreal, October 18, 2016** — A confidential [presentation](#) by Imperial Tobacco Canada to its multinational parent company, British American Tobacco, reveals both the objectives and tactics behind the company's decade-long campaign to “keep the contraband issue alive”, despite the fact that [contraband decreased substantially](#) in the country during this period.

The document, provided by an anonymous whistleblower, shows how Imperial Tobacco used retailer and other business associations as front groups for their lobbying efforts aimed at preventing effective regulations and tax increases.



The Imperial Tobacco presentation describes the public relations and lobbying activities of two seemingly independent groups — the Canadian Convenience Stores Association (CCSA) and the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco (NCACT) as “*Our Campaigns*”.

The document explains how these groups succeeded in providing a “*credible voice for contraband tobacco*”, a key strategic goal for the industry given its own lack of credibility. For example, the NCACT, which was set up by the CCSA and is managed by the lobbying firm Impact Public Affairs, is seen playing a key role in distancing Imperial Tobacco even further from its anti-regulation and anti-tax public relations campaigns (“*Not just ‘Big Tobacco’!*”). The document also shows how the industry was able to recruit credible third parties (like municipalities), purportedly to combat contraband, in order to use as political leverage to influence government policies and prevent the implementation of effective tobacco control measures.

“*The use of front groups by the tobacco industry is not new,*” says Cynthia Callard, Executive Director of Physicians for a Smoke-free Canada, “*but front groups are usually difficult to expose at the moment that they are the most effective. These revelations are particularly relevant today as these groups are currently involved in a campaign to undermine plain and standardized packaging reforms.*”

“*The presentation highlights not only the extent to which the industry controls both the agenda and the messaging of pro-tobacco front groups, but also the tobacco industry’s ability to manipulate credible third parties who have no vested interests in the tobacco business, such as municipalities and the media, into helping them create a public and political narrative tailored to protect its interests.*”

*“It is perfectly acceptable for retailers and other groups to express their views about government health initiatives,”* adds Flory Doucas, spokesperson for the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control. *“What is not acceptable is when the tobacco industry is allowed to hide behind front groups without disclosing their financial relationships with them.”* Ms. Doucas noted that representatives from both groups [repeatedly refused to answer questions](#) about their financing during provincial and federal legislative hearings.

*“What is now clear is how easy it is for the industry to hide their involvement in a succession of campaigns aimed at subverting science-based public health measures that have broad public support. Front groups are a violation of one of the most basic principles of a functioning democracy: transparency. Governments have a duty not only to promote transparency but to ensure transparency in policy-making. Similarly, the media must be much more vigilant in exposing the true nature and purpose of groups that attempt to prevent governments from enacting public health measures, otherwise they too end up playing into the tobacco industry’s playbook,”* concludes Ms. Doucas.

Melodie Tilson, Policy Director with the Non-Smokers’ Rights Association, agrees: *“Governments have a responsibility to protect public health from tobacco industry interference. This is not only a moral responsibility, but one required under international law”*. Indeed, the global health treaty on tobacco (the WHO’s [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, ratified by Canada](#)) puts the full onus on governments to monitor tobacco industry attempts to subvert tobacco control initiatives, to inform the public of these attempts and to adopt measures to prevent industry interference.

*“Imperial Tobacco’s presentation, together with the industry’s current attempts to prevent the implementation of federal regulations on plain packaging, clearly illustrate the vulnerability of the public interest to the industry’s deceptive practices and underscore the urgent need for measures aimed at making tobacco industry lobbying more transparent. After a decade of inaction, the federal government recently announced that it would be reviewing ways to strengthen implementation of this aspect of the treaty<sup>1</sup>. The question is: how long do we have to wait before the government puts a stop to these practices?”* declared Ms. Tilson.

The groups are asking:

- 1) that all policymakers and the media treat organisations that oppose tobacco policies with renewed scepticism and require timely declarations of financial and other relationships with tobacco interests in all interactions with them;
- 2) that measures be put in place requiring regular reports from tobacco companies regarding their affiliations, political activities and associated expenditures;
- 3) that a transparent system of disclosure be established through which all non-tobacco industry organisations lobbying any part of government on a tobacco-related issue must disclose any consideration from tobacco companies, financial or other;
- 4) that health officials raise awareness and share information with other government departments as well as levels of government regarding industry interference in public policy development.

**Relevant links:**

1. [Imperial Tobacco Canada's CORA presentation to British American Tobacco](#)
2. [Brief analysis of the presentation \(including counter-facts and examples\)](#)
3. [BAT description of CORA's role \(Corporate and Regulatory Affairs\)](#)
4. Directives related to [Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control](#) on preventing tobacco industry interference
5. Samples of CCSA'S current efforts to oppose plain packaging: [public statements](#) regarding its impact on contraband, campaign to [mobilize retailers](#) through an [Internet module](#) including contraband arguments
6. [KPMG's letter](#) regarding the tobacco industry's unauthorized use of its report linking Australia's plain packaging legislation to contraband (also see the [study's disclaimer](#) on page 2)
7. A [new British Medical Journal study on tobacco industry interference](#) which found that *"the multifaceted opposition to standardised packaging [in the UK] was primarily undertaken by third parties with financial relationships with major tobacco manufacturers"* and proposes recommendations similar to those listed above
8. [Recommendations by health groups](#) regarding a set of measures to limit tobacco industry interference in tobacco control policy-making, in line with the FCTC's Article 5.3 guidelines

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<sup>i</sup> "Health Canada recognizes the importance of Article 5.3 and in the last quarter of 2015 put in place measures to undertake a review of existing domestic actions, global approaches and opportunities to reinforce and build on current domestic measures. Details and outcomes of these activities will be captured in Canada's subsequent FCTC reports." **Government of Canada**, "Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: Canada's 2016 report", 2016.  
[http://apps.who.int/ctc/implementation/database/sites/implementation/files/documents/reports/canada\\_2016\\_report\\_0.pdf](http://apps.who.int/ctc/implementation/database/sites/implementation/files/documents/reports/canada_2016_report_0.pdf)