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**Chair, Canadian Coalition for Action on Tobacco (CCAT) Mass Media Sub-Committee  
2146 Saint-Denis, Montreal, Quebec, H2W 2M5 (514) 598-5533**

January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007

The Honourable Tony Clement, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Health  
Minister's Office - Health Canada  
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture  
Postal Locator: 0906C  
Ottawa ON K1A 0K9

Dear Minister,

**Re: Health Canada media program for 2007-2008**

As the current mass media campaign for 2006-2007 ads are being aired, various health groups have expressed their disappointment to me in not having been more involved in the conception and development of these ads. Although there was limited consultation with members of the Canadian Coalition for Action on Tobacco (CCAT) early in the fiscal year, I and many of my colleagues feel that we had no real input into this campaign.

This is a marked difference compared to the early years of the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (2002, 2003), when CCAT members were formally invited to various consultation meeting (although whether our advice was heeded is another matter). In 2003, a directive from the Minister's office allowed some CCAT members to provide Health Canada with detailed feedback at many critical conception and development stages for at least one campaign (SHS youth ads).

As chair of the Canadian Coalition for Action on Tobacco Mass Media Sub-Committee, I would ask that for the upcoming 2007-2008 year member organizations be consulted in a meaningful and more engaged way.

Despite this complaint, you may be interested to know that (without there being any formal discussion or position taken), I have mostly been privy to positive comments regarding the "Ghost - Second hand smoke" advertisement. I agree: this ad is very well done and effectively conveys the message that it sets out to do.

However, the ongoing concern regarding the greater need for policy-oriented ads remains as strong as ever. Ads focused on individual behaviour can be useful and effective to a certain extent, but broader messages addressing social norms, the need for legislation and industry behaviour remain the most effective and, especially in times of shrinking resources, cost-effective communication strategies to fight the tobacco epidemic.

In 2003, CCAT members identified a list of key criteria for a successful mass media campaign and I would ask that you consider applying them for the next mass media phase. Here is a summary:

- 1. Have a clear and over-arching communications objective.** This objective should be to ***"increase public appreciation for the need for government and societal initiatives to reduce tobacco use and its resulting harm"***. The priority should not be to please people or to increase smokers' desire to quit, but rather to shift public attitudes about tobacco products and tobacco

manufacturers, about industry actions that increase tobacco use and about the effective measures that can be taken to reduce it.

2. **Get noticed and generate discussions.** If mass media campaigns are to change social norms, they need to lead public opinion, not follow it. This means producing ads that will inevitably be criticized by some people for 'going too far'. Campaigns which are not noticed (either because they are too bland or under-funded) are an ineffective use of public money, and an irresponsible response to the epidemic of tobacco use.
3. **Contribute to the speedy and effective implementation of tobacco control.** The campaign should assist the implementation of measures such as:
  - Restrictions or bans on activities which encourage or induce smoking (including retail and other promotions)
  - Bans on smoking in workplaces and all public places where there are none.
  - Regulating tobacco packaging and marketing to minimise or eliminate any and all misleading or false assumptions on the dangers of tobacco (misleading descriptors, plain packaging, etc.)
  - Appropriate levels of taxation and measures to fight smuggling
  - Holding the industry responsible for its misconduct
4. **Illustrate the scope and nature of the tobacco epidemic to Canadians.** This information should be presented in ways appropriate to the scale of the harm that has been caused, and with a view to sparking the type of discussion that leads to social norm change. Canadians should understand the size and devastation of the tobacco epidemic, especially in comparison to other feared risks, such as SARS, West Nile virus, car accidents, AIDS and so on.
5. **Speak to all Canadians.** Tobacco is a problem that affects all Canadians, not just those who smoke, who are exposed to smoke or who are expected to start smoking (youth). The campaign should show all Canadians that the challenge to reduce tobacco use is an urgent national priority. It should especially not target youth in particular.

As you know, tobacco control groups have expressed their opposition and exasperation at the major cuts to the mass media (and overall program) budget. We are hopeful that a significant amount of the original funding be reinstated.

However, even with a limited budget the potential for effective messages is great and therefore we would appreciate the opportunity to work with you and your department on the development of the next campaign.

Yours sincerely,

*[Signature retirée pour fin de publication]*

Heidi Rathjen  
 Chair, Mass Media Sub-Committee  
 Canadian Coalition for Action on Tobacco

c.c.: Cathy Sabiston; Dawn Hachey