

HAVE YOUR SAY: Plain Packaging of Tobacco Products

The Government of Canada recently announced their intention to introduce plain packaging for tobacco products. There is currently a public consultation underway to review this policy, which will conclude at the end of August 2016.

While we are encouraged that the government is consulting with Canadians (and our retail members) on this issue, we are very concerned about the impact plain packaging will have for our retailer members.

Here are the facts on plain packaging:

- Plain packaging for tobacco products is a policy experiment that has failed to meaningfully reduce smoking in Australia – the one country in which it was implemented. Smoking rates in Australia after the introduction of plain packaging has continued to decline at the same trend rates as before the introduction of plain packaging while the country has also increased tobacco taxes by 4 annual increases of 12.5% (or 50% over 4 years).
- The Australian Department of Health dismissed two years' worth of direct evidence, then expressed its support for the adoption of plain packaging relying on indirect and subjective evidence only.
- In addition to not reducing smoking in Australia, plain packaging has had serious negative unintended consequences. Retail industry data shows a significant shift taking place in the Australian market towards illicit tobacco in the absence of brand loyalty. A 2015 study by KPMG showed that illegal contraband tobacco consumption in Australia has jumped 30 per cent in the past two years.
- While plain packaging has failed, there are a number of alternative solutions available to the Canadian government to consider that may effectively reduce smoking rates including increased awareness and educational programs, enhanced contraband enforcement, youth tobacco bans, and modernizing penalties for non-compliance.

Additionally, contraband tobacco is already a serious problem in Canada with the RCMP identifying 50 illegal tobacco manufacturing plants operating on reserves – a situation that the Australian government did not have to face when introducing plain packaging. Introducing plain packaging will only make it easier for criminals in Canada

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to recreate the look of legal tobacco products and sell this to consumers – and by standardizing plain packages, law enforcement, consumers and retailers will have great difficulty differentiating between legal and illegal products.

HOW CAN YOU VOICE YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT THIS MATTER?

The Government of Canada (Health Minister) has begun a consultation process that will allow Canadians (including retailers) to express their concerns about this initiative. The CCSA has set up a website - www.unintendedconsequences.ca - which allows you to participate in these consultations by sending an email to the federal Health Minister and your local Member of Parliament outlining your concerns.

www.unintendedconsequences.ca also allows you to share the website with those you think may be interested in participating, and to spread the word on social media. The website also provides information on the potential impacts of plain packaging on our businesses, and asks the Government of Canada to consider alternative approaches to curbing tobacco consumption (legal and illegal). If you own or operate more than 1 site, we ask that you consider promoting this means of making a submission to staff at each of your sites.

TO PARTICIPATE USING THE WEBSITE, PLEASE FORWARD THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUR AFFILIATES:

- 1) Go to www.unintendedconsequences.ca.
- 2) Verify that you are 19 years of age or older.
- 3) Click on the button which says “Take Action”
- 4) Provide your contact information (First Name, Last Name, and Email) and identify if you are a retailer/distributor or a consumer
- 5) Type in your address to find your local Member of Parliament
- 6) Determine which letter you would like to send to the Minister of Health and your local Member of Parliament by hitting the “Cycle” button on the left side of the screen
- 7) When you are satisfied with the letter, click “Send Message”.
- 8) Spread the word about the website and consultation by posting a message on your Facebook or Twitter profile, and by sharing the site with your friends via email.

We are asking all of our members to take three minutes out of their day to participate in this very important consultation. The voice of our industry is strong – now is the time to speak up and let your concerns be heard. Submissions using this website must be completed by no later than August 30, 2016.

Should you have any questions or concerns about www.unintendedconsequences.ca please do not hesitate to reach out to us directly.