



MEDIA RELEASE

'Plain packaging' of tobacco fails in Australia; convenience retailers urge Canada to avoid similar, costly mistake here

TORONTO, December 1, 2017 – On the fifth anniversary of the introduction of plain packaging of tobacco products in Australia, Canadian retailers are raising alarm over the policy's negative impact on small business retailers in that country, prompting the Canadian Convenience Stores Association to call on the federal government to put the brakes on bringing similar rules to Canada.

"Down Under they assumed that plain packaging of tobacco products would discourage smoking," says Satinder Chera of the Canadian Convenience Stores Association. "Instead, the overwhelming evidence out of Australia shows the opposite, including a big uptick in the illegal tobacco market."

Australia became the first country to implement plain packaging legislation for tobacco products in 2012, which removed all branding from packages (logo, trademark, colors etc.), along with an increase in the size of written and graphic health warnings. Canada has pledged to do the same as part of its Bill S-5, which is currently before the House of Commons. Incidentally, Canada has opted not to pursue a similar path for the upcoming legalization of cannabis sales for the same reasons that the CCSA is opposed to plain packaging for tobacco products – makes it easier for criminals to replicate packaging.

The CCSA is asking the federal government to heed the warnings from the following detailed studies out of Australia and elsewhere, which highlight the failure of their experiment with plain packaging:

- Between 2013-2016, government data showed no decline in the smoking rate, which Australia acknowledged was the first time in 23 years that the smoking rate had not decreased;
- According to a KPMG study there has been a 24% increase in the consumption of illicit tobacco in Australia since the implementation of plain packaging. Canada already has a big problem with illegal tobacco, with the illegal market accounting for nearly 40% of all cigarettes smoked in Ontario;
- The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission report on drug monitoring indicates total tobacco consumption has increased since 2012; and
- If that was not enough, preliminary data out of France is reporting that since January 2017, when branded tobacco packages were removed from store shelves, sales of cigarettes have shot up over the previous year, which recently prompted the Country's health minister to acknowledge that plain packaging was not working.



Ironically, the Canadian government need not look any further than its own policy on the forthcoming sale of cannabis to realize why plain packaging is such a bad idea. “We agree with the federal government that proper branding is critical to wresting away control over the cannabis market from criminals,” adds Chera. “Which is why we hope the experience with plain pack in Australia, and the CCSA’s recent paper on bringing an evidence-based approach to the sale of age-tested products, will help Canada to avoid the same costly mistake that the citizens and small retailers in Australia have endured over the last five years.”

For more information about the CCSA’s position on plain packaging, please visit www.cstoreday.ca.

Media contact

Satinder Chera, President
Canadian Convenience Stores Association
(905) 845-9339 | schera@theccsa.ca
www.cstores.ca | @CanadianCstores

About the Canadian Convenience Stores Association

The Canadian Convenience Stores Association is the national voice for convenience retailers. Working alongside its regional and national affiliated Associations, the CCSA brings together the retailers, distributors, suppliers and manufacturers in the convenience retail channel, who serve 10 million customers each day across the country.