



Canadian
Cancer
Society

BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS WE'LL HAVE A HEALTHIER BC

VANCOUVER—August 13, 2009 While BC retains the lowest smoking rate (15%) and lowest daily smoking rate (10%) in the country (and the lowest ever recorded by a province), the rate has been relatively stable over the last five years.

"Steady is just not good enough, when young people continue to take up a lethal habit and passive smoke threatens the health of our communities, commented Barbara Kaminsky, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Cancer Society BC & Yukon Division.

Findings released today by Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) highlight a national trend whereby it took three years for smoking across Canada to fall 1%.

The BC current smoking total for years 2004 through 2008 has followed a similar pattern with only a 1% change between successive years.

BC	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Current smoking rate	15%	14%	16%	15%	15%
Daily smoking rate	10%	11%	12%	11%	12%

"Despite our significant efforts over many years, the availability and promotion of tobacco products limits progress," she said. "The federal and provincial governments are not doing enough in the area of taxation, legislation and cessation program assistance."

The Society recommends that the sale of tobacco products be prohibited in all pharmacies; more subsidies be available for nicotine replacement therapies and counseling among other action.

The Canadian Cancer Society is calling for a ban on the sale of flavoured cigarettes and cigarillos to young adults, a sub group that is disproportionately high.

Tobacco companies continue to advertise and use point of sale materials because restrictions are not comprehensive. The availability of cigarettes in some locations, such as pharmacies and universities, restaurants and bars, hinders prevention strategies.

"We appreciate the action that the BC government has taken to date on limiting exposure to passive smoking but there is much more needed for a significant change in the numbers of smokers," said Ms Kaminsky.

To decrease exposure to environmental carcinogens in cigarette smoke, the Society is supporting the introduction of province-wide legislation to prohibit smoking on outdoor patios of restaurants and bars.

Ms Kaminsky added, *"While the BC picture is encouraging we cannot forget the impact in regional areas and on vulnerable population groups, like First Nation communities. For example, smoking rates amongst indigenous people are estimated to be much higher than provincial averages."*

Smoking rates in indigenous communities have been estimated at 45% of the indigenous population.*

Smoking rates in Northern BC have been estimated among the highest in the province. In 2006 Northern Health reported that over 23% of their population were smokers.



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In 2008, 2,800 people in BC were diagnosed with lung cancer and 2,400 lost their lives to this aggressive but preventable disease. **

"Because 30% of all cancers are caused by smoking, the potential impact on a much larger group of Canadians is far more significant," said Ms Kaminsky.

* Health & Well Being of Aboriginal People in BC 2001

**Canadian Cancer Statistics 2008

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For further information please contact Michael Leland, Director of Communications and Marketing 604 675 7360 or 604 375 4042

Please note that Ms Kaminsky is available for interview.