



Convenience Stores Applaud Action on Organized Crime, Contraband Tobacco

TORONTO, ON (June 12th 2020) - The Convenience Industry Council of Canada (CICC), representing 25,000 convenience retailers across the country, are applauding efforts from the Ontario Provincial Police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ontario Ministry of Finance and other enforcement agencies following a significant organized crime bust that spanned a number of Canadian provinces.

The two-year investigation focused on the illegal manufacturing and distribution of illicit tobacco and cannabis, as well as the trafficking of cocaine and fentanyl. In total, 11.5 million contraband cigarettes with a street value of over \$3M was seized, disrupting sophisticated organized crime networks in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia.

“The depth and scope of this investigation reveals just how extensive the problem of contraband tobacco and its links to organized crime is in Canada,” said Anne Kothawala, President of the Convenience Industry Council of Canada. “These groups are well-financed and organized, and their operations have major consequences on public health and safety as well as on small business convenience retailers.”

The Council also noted \$3.3 million in lost tax revenue for federal and provincial governments resulting from the bust. “Particularly at a moment when governments are looking to finance COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, decision-makers should support even greater actions to break up contraband networks that consistently evade taxes,” said Kothawala.

“These are criminals who are flooding the legal market with cheap, unregulated cigarettes that have economic consequences for both law-abiding retailers like convenience stores as well as governments across the country,” said Kothawala. She further noted that these illegal products are more easily obtained by youth, as organized criminals are not concerned about access to tobacco by minors.

The Council will continue to work with government and enforcement agencies to draw attention to the threat posed by contraband tobacco for both businesses and communities. Canada’s convenience stores remain committed to eradicating youth access to tobacco and vape products and will continue to press governments to adopt policies that ensure these products are not obtained by minors.



About the Convenience Industry Council of Canada (CICC)

The CICC is a national, not-for-profit council that unites our members who put the needs of the customer first and provides a place of community. We advocate for the diverse and dynamic convenience channel by representing retail and distributor members to the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government on issues affecting their business. For More information, please visit: <https://convenienceindustry.ca/>

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