

February 28, 2023

Convenience Industry Council of Canada (CICC) Statement on Alberta's 2023 Budget

The Convenience Industry Council of Canada (CICC) congratulates Premier Danielle Smith on her government's first budget for Alberta. Although, it included significant resources to public safety, the budget missed an opportunity to counter contraband tobacco and its significant impact in Alberta communities.

"Convenience stores play an essential role in communities across the province. Too many of them are closing, largely due to government inaction on contraband tobacco. While CICC welcomes the absence of new or increased taxes in this year's budget, it won't be enough to address the impact of organized crime on contraband," noted Sara MacIntyre, CICC's Vice-President for Western Canada.

"Store owners are also reporting significant reduction in legal tobacco sales. The massive proliferation of contraband tobacco across the province is not only a massive illegal industry that costs the government millions in lost tax revenues and affects the viability of the corner store, but it also threatens community safety. The additional funds for 'contract policing and the sheriff's branch to help municipalities and fight organized and serious crime,' should also specifically include tackling contraband tobacco."

"Failure to control contraband tobacco strikes at the province's tobacco control strategy. Contraband makes tobacco cheap, thwarting public health objectives and reducing tax dollars. We are asking the Premier and Minister Ellis to establish a dedicated contraband tobacco unit. It will help keep communities safe and convenience stores open," concluded MacIntyre.

The CICC is a national, not-for-profit association uniting retailers, manufacturers and distributors in the convenience industry who employ more than 212,000 Canadians and sell more than \$55 billion annually in goods and services. In British Columbia, the CICC represents more than 2,400 stores and employ more than 21,000 Albertans and thousands more indirectly.

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