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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **BC TAKES STEPS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO SECOND-HAND SMOKE**

VICTORIA – British Columbia is taking steps to reduce the health effects of tobacco use through new regulations that restrict the promotion and sale of tobacco products, as well as a ban on smoking in all indoor public spaces and workplaces, announced Health Minister George Abbott today.

“We are working to reduce tobacco use across our province and ensuring that British Columbians are protected from the deadly effects of second-hand smoke,” said Abbott. “Stricter regulations about public and workplace smoking are part of our strategy to reduce the impact of tobacco on our health system and prevent chronic diseases associated with tobacco use.”

The new regulations fall under the Tobacco Control Act and will take effect on March 31, 2008. The new tobacco regulations will ban:

- Smoking in all indoor public spaces and work places, with exemptions made for the ceremonial use of tobacco by Aboriginal people;
- Smoking within three metres of public and workplace doorways, open windows or air intakes;
- Tobacco sales in public buildings including: hospitals and health facilities, universities and colleges, athletic and recreational facilities, and provincial government buildings;
- Display of tobacco products in all places where tobacco is sold that are accessible to youth under 19; and
- Tobacco ads that hang from the ceiling, countertop tobacco displays, self-serve tobacco displays and outdoor tobacco signs.

These new provincial regulations will establish a baseline of regulation that landlords, businesses, municipalities and health authorities can choose to exceed to fit the needs of their community, clients and population. Unless prohibited by municipal regulations, smoking will still be allowed on the outdoor patios of restaurants and bars.

The new regulations will take effect on March 31, 2008, allowing retailers and other businesses four months to ensure that their premises comply with the changes required by the Tobacco Control Act. In June 2007, the Province held a six-week public consultation to allow the general public and stakeholder groups, such as retailers, the hospitality sector and health advocacy groups, the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed tobacco regulation.

“Eliminating smoking in public spaces and all workplaces will have a positive impact on indoor air quality and the overall health of British Columbians,” said provincial health officer Dr. Perry Kendall. “Most smokers start before the age of 18 and limiting youth access to advertising is also an important step in protecting the public health of this province.”

Tobacco use kills over 6,000 British Columbians each year, and is estimated to cost the B.C. economy \$2.3 billion every year. Cigarette smoking is the primary risk factor for diseases of the circulatory system, cancers and respiratory diseases, and exposure to second-hand smoke kills approximately 100 people in B.C. each year.

“Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease and death in British Columbia and, unfortunately, the number of new cancer cases is estimated to rise this year in the province,” said Barbara Kaminsky, CEO of the BC and Yukon Division of the Canadian Cancer Society. “Exposure to second-hand smoke increases our risk of cancer and implementing regulations that restrict exposure to the harmful effects of tobacco use is a significant step in our fight against cancer.”

In September 2007, legislation took effect that banned tobacco use in schools and on school grounds and in October 2008, implementation of smoke-free premise policies in all health authorities will be complete.

The Ministry of Health currently funds smoking cessation programs such as QuitNow.ca and QuitNow by Phone, which are available, with translation services in 130 languages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all British Columbians.

The new legislation supports the Province’s larger tobacco control strategy and programs such as ActNow BC. This tobacco strategy aims to further reduce B.C.’s smoking rates and to improve the health of British Columbians. ActNow BC works with provincial government ministries, the health sector and a variety of health promotion partners to deliver programs designed to encourage healthy choices by all British Columbians.

The new tobacco control regulation will be available on-line at [www.health.gov.bc.ca/tobacco/](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/tobacco/).

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