

# Canadian health groups respond to Philip Morris International's \$1 billion research fund: Government action needed to block tobacco industry interference in public health issues

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**Coalition québécoise pour le contrôle du tabac** 

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OTTAWA and MONTREAL, Sept. 15, 2017 /CNW Telbec/ - Canadian health organizations responded to the announcement yesterday that Philip Morris International had pledged \$1 billion to a new purpose-built foundation by calling on the Canadian government to immediately restore public funding for tobacco control and to ensure that the costs of reducing tobacco use are passed on to the tobacco industry.

"In this recent ploy, Philip Morris is using the same bag of tricks it invented in the 1950s, to create its own research bodies in order to manipulate the research environment and delay effective measures to reduce smoking," explained Neil Collishaw, Research Director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. [1] "We risk repeating the tragedy of past decades unless the government moves quickly to ensure that the new challenges of e-cigarettes and so-called reduced risk products are addressed by reliable and uncontaminated research."

"A year has passed since we provided Health Canada with proposals for ways to protect public health from tobacco industry interference in research and policy" said Melodie Tilson, Director of Policy for the Non-Smokers' Rights Association. [2] "Since that time, we have seen no action on any of our 20 recommendations, nor any indication that these are a priority of Health Canada. Recent events and the industry's abuse of science as a front for tobacco marketing [3] have increased our concerns that Canada is vulnerable to tobacco industry interference."

"The most recent intrusion of the tobacco industry into research funding is all the more dangerous in the context of massive cuts to tobacco control funding by the previous government, and the failure of the new government to restore resources for independent activities," said Cynthia Callard, Executive Director of

Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. "External policy research was abandoned by Health Canada in 2012. The failure of the new federal government to restore this important work has left little national-level capacity for independent response to industry-funded disinformation." [4]

"The federal government should apply the polluter-pay principle to public health by levying a regulatory charge on tobacco manufacturers," explained Flory Doucas, Co-Director and Spokesperson for the Quebec Coalition on Tobacco Control. "We have previously made this recommendation as a way to require the industry to internalize some of the costs they impose on society." Like many other health groups, the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada have recommended that Canada follow the example of the United States and France in imposing licensing fees on the industry. [5]

Tobacco control organizations are calling on the Minister of Health and parliamentarians to move quickly to implement these measures.

"Over the past months, Philip Morris International and other multinational tobacco companies have stepped up their efforts to re-invent their markets, their public image and their influence on government. Canadians deserve a federal government that will respond quickly and effectively to these new challenges," said Michael Perley, Executive Director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco.

[1] A history of these events can be found in documents provided to the Quebec Superior Court during the CQTS/Blais and Létourneau class action trials. See paragraphs 1342 to 1595 of the Plaintiffs' Notes and Authorities.

[http://www.smoke-free.ca/eyeonthetrial/Plaintiff\\_Notes\\_and\\_Authorities\\_public.pdf](http://www.smoke-free.ca/eyeonthetrial/Plaintiff_Notes_and_Authorities_public.pdf).

[2] Canada's Implementation of Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. A Civil Society Shadow Report. September 2016

[http://cqct.qc.ca/Documents\\_docs/DOCU\\_2016/MEMO\\_16\\_09\\_00\\_CCAT\\_shadowreport\\_Article5POINT3.pdf](http://cqct.qc.ca/Documents_docs/DOCU_2016/MEMO_16_09_00_CCAT_shadowreport_Article5POINT3.pdf)

[3] L'Economiste. Philip Morris International: Le cigarettier parie sur les produits de substitution.

<http://www.leconomiste.com/article/1017271-philip-morris-international-le-cigarettier-parie-sur-les-produits-de-substitution>

[4] Tobacco Info. Harper government guts Federal Tobacco Control Strategy. Big Tobacco wins big with \$15 million cut from tobacco control budget.

<http://www.tobaccoinfo.ca/mag10/federal.htm>

[5] Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada and Coalition Québécoise pour le contrôle du tabac. Pre-Budget Submission 2018.

[http://www.smoke-free.ca/eng\\_home/2017/Federal\\_2018\\_Budget\\_Submission-PSC2.pdf](http://www.smoke-free.ca/eng_home/2017/Federal_2018_Budget_Submission-PSC2.pdf)

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