



URBAN PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK
RÉSEAU CANADIEN POUR LA SANTÉ URBAINE

Garfield Mahood, OC
President
Campaign for Justice on Tobacco Fraud
720 Spadina Avenue, Suite 500
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2T9

Dear Mr. Mahood,

On behalf of the Urban Public Health Network of Canada (UPHN), which comprises Medical Officers of Health from 18 of Canada's largest cities, I am writing to congratulate you and thank you for the Campaign for Justice on Tobacco Fraud. We understand and strongly support the campaign and its goals, to secure positive public health outcomes from the health care cost recovery litigation that is now before the courts in several provinces. You have permission to add my name as Medical Officer of Health for Ottawa Public Health and Chair of the UPHN to the Campaign's planned letter to provincial and territorial attorneys general and ministers of health.

We applaud governments passing legislation and filing lawsuits against Canadian companies and their international parent companies for the recovery of health care costs from tobacco use arising out of the alleged wrongful behaviour. We appreciate the work your Campaign is doing to draw to the attention of the governments involved the health benefit potential of such litigation.

Positive health outcomes from these lawsuits, including changed industry behaviour, are among the most meaningful ways for Canadian governments to hold tobacco manufacturers responsible for their predatory behaviour and for the victims of tobacco and/or their families to be assured that a measure of justice has been obtained.

Furthermore, in the interests of public health and the Rule of Law, it is essential that the objective of deterrence lie at the core of this litigation. Now, through litigation, Canadian jurisdictions have begun the process of holding the industry accountable for decades of destructive activity. This has the potential to create a powerful deterrent against similar behaviour by this industry and others in the future.

It is significant to note that the World Health Organization gives legitimacy to the aspirations of the health community that public health objectives be made a priority in the litigation process:

“A realistic understanding of tobacco litigation over the last fifty years, and appreciation that tobacco use is a global health problem, both suggest that decisions about tobacco litigation and the relief to be sought should be premised not on the expectation of large financial recoveries, but on the goal of advancing public health in a meaningful fashion.”



Despite breakthroughs over the last three decades in policy and legislation related to the tobacco issue, the tobacco epidemic remains Canada's number one preventable cause of illness and death. We sincerely hope that your Campaign, and our support, will help persuade our governments to keep public health outcomes at top-of-mind in the litigation process, and further that our support of this initiative will encourage others to also support the objectives of your advocacy on behalf of the public's health. On our part, we will work also to further develop public understanding and support for your leadership.

Finally we wish to thank you for the riveting, evidence-based presentation that you made to the UPHN on the litigation underway.

Sincerely,



Dr. Isra Levy
Chair of the Urban Public Health Network
And Medical Officer of Health
Ottawa Public Health

