

## **TOBACCO FARMERS IN CRISIS**

**June 24, 2005**

### **Canada's Tobacco Control Strategy Potentially Contributing to Child Labour, Deforestation and Economic Dependency on Tobacco in Developing Countries – in Exchange for a Potentially More Hazardous and Cheaper Canadian Cigarette**

On the heels of the 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Tobacco or Health and other sweeping tobacco control legislation throughout Canada (e.g. Ontario's Smoke-Free Ontario Act; Québec's Bill 112), the need to address emerging tobacco-related health, social and economic threats to Canada has never been more timely or appropriate.

The ramifications of Canada increasingly outsourcing its current tobacco production needs (up to 80 million pounds of tobacco leaf) to unsuspecting developing nations speak as importantly to Canada encouraging, if not at the very least contributing to the economic dependency on tobacco in third world countries; the potential use of child labour (in the growing/harvesting of the crop) and deforestation in countries like Brazil (for curing the tobacco leaves). More to this point, that Canada is increasingly forsaking its Canadian farmers and allowing multi-national manufacturers to increasingly import and use foreign tobacco leaf in the manufacturing of Canadian cigarettes goes undeniably against the government of Canada's publicly stated position and goals on tobacco control (i.e. Federal Tobacco Control Strategy, National Strategy to Reduce Tobacco Use in Canada, WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control).

The increase use of foreign tobacco leaf in Canadian cigarettes is doing more than simply economically devastating Canadian farm families and their communities. This trend is allowing for a potentially more dangerous product to be sold at a much more affordable price (-17%) to Canadian smokers and potential smokers (e.g. increasing youth consumption and smoking uptake – justified by well established price-elasticity /economic literature). Tobacco Farmers in Crisis has been lobbying all members of Federal Parliament, the Ontario Legislature and every key Minister in every other Canadian province, in the hope that the necessary dialogue and remedial action can eventually materialize. The group's proposal to government would look to help Canadian governments re-secure control over both quality and pricing of tobacco products sold and consumed in our country. The proposal would further help to mitigate the undeniable impact of emerging tobacco production trends on the health of Canadians, while re-stabilizing farming communities throughout Ontario - and not unnecessarily contributing to devastating economic, social and health problems in other countries.

There has never been a more pressing and health-related need for Canadian governments to support Canadian tobacco farm families, allowing them to exclusively supply the existing Canadian market - until a comprehensive, equitable and orderly exit strategy for tobacco production in Canada (which would mirror actual declines in consumption) can be developed and delivered. Canadian governments, Canadian tobacco producers and the

Canadian public health community must work together to re-assert and retain control over all tobacco production, which supplies the still existing Canadian market.

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