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NEWS RELEASE

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH
1997:124**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**B.C. ISSUES DEMANDS TO MULTINATIONAL TOBACCO INDUSTRY
- TELL THE TRUTH, QUIT TARGETING CHILDREN: PREMIER**

VICTORIA -- Premier Glen Clark and Health Minister Joy MacPhail today challenged the tobacco industry to leave children alone and tell the truth about tobacco products.

"The products of the \$168 billion worldwide industry kill 5,800 British Columbians a year and the number is rising," Clark said.

"Ninety per cent of people who smoke started before age 19. Half of them will ultimately die as a result of smoking. Every day in B.C., 20 kids take up smoking. By targeting kids, the tobacco industry builds long-term customers and profits and sentences our children to shorter, healthier lives.

"It's time to finally go to the source of the problem...the tobacco industry itself. That is why the government is calling on the industry to finally do the right thing."

The health minister has written letters to Canadian CEOs of multinational tobacco companies, telling them it's time to:

- **stop all marketing targeted at children and teens and help protect them from tobacco;**
- **disclose the health dangers of tobacco, all the ingredients used in tobacco products and the manipulation of nicotine levels to keep smokers hooked;**
- **be accountable for the health care treatment and prevention costs of tobacco-related illnesses.**

"In British Columbia, we're all paying half a billion dollars a year to treat the health problems tobacco causes, while the tobacco industry is reaping almost \$1 billion in profits in Canada every year at the expense of our children and thousands of other British Columbians," Clark said.

MacPhail said the challenge to the industry is the first in a series of actions the government is taking to protect children from the tobacco industry and help British Columbians break their addiction to smoking.

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MacPhail said she will also be introducing legislation in the House later today that will pave the way for legal action against the tobacco industry, should that prove necessary.

"While putting this legislation in place will enable us to move quickly in that direction, I do not view legal action as the first step we should be taking against the industry," MacPhail said. "But I believe our readiness to take this action will force the industry to consider the other options we are presenting."

"Our government is prepared to consider other revenue measures, such as licensing fees, to ensure the industry pays its share of the cost of smoking prevention and the treatment of tobacco-related illnesses," MacPhail said.

"And while the tobacco industry considers our government's challenge, we will be airing television messages which show how the tobacco industry glamorizes its products, and that the truth about tobacco is very different," she said.

The award-winning messages were produced by the State of Massachusetts and generously provided to British Columbia by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. The messages, which focus on the industry's callous disregard for the truth, will air over the next three weeks.

"Just as the problems created by the multinational tobacco industry affect people all over the world, the messages in these television spots are universal," MacPhail said. "Our children shouldn't have to learn the truth about tobacco the hard way, as the people in these ads have done."

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