

Relatives (and friends) of Dead and Dying Smokers

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NEWS RELEASE - THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1987

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RELATIVES OF TOBACCO VICTIMS ORGANIZE TO SUE INDUSTRY

Ottawa - Relatives and friends of tobacco industry victims are organizing to encourage law suits against tobacco manufacturers. Relatives (and friends) of Dead and Dying Smokers (RODDS) believes that current Canadian law will permit successful product liability law suits against the industry enabling victims or their estates to claim compensation and punitive damages.

"Tobacco industry executives have failed to explain the addictive nature of tobacco products. They haven't begun to clearly and adequately tell people of the magnitude of the risk involved in using tobacco. When people die as a result of their failure to explain risks that they know about or should know about, we think that's criminal behaviour," the Executive Director of the new organization, Ronald Hart, explained. "How many Canadians know that over half of all regular smokers will die as a result of their addiction?" said Hart.

Lawyer Robert Aaron, a director of RODDS, referred to a U.S. Federal Trade Commission report that found the attack by tobacco manufacturers on the scientific validity of the indictment of tobacco products and the industry's refusal to acknowledge the health risks of their products amounted to an unfair business practice. "The American industry is under tremendous pressure from product liability suits. We believe similar causes of action exist in Canada," said Aaron. "There have been over 30,000 clinical studies showing a relationship between smoking and disease. In fact, the U.S. Surgeon General called the industry's attack upon the scientific and medical evidence an attack upon science itself."

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The new RODDS organization will lobby for amendments to the Criminal Code or new legislation to hold tobacco and advertising industry executives criminally responsible for acts of deception or failure to warn associated with tobacco marketing practices. "There are tens of thousands of victims and families of victims out there who have never considered that their disease or the death of a loved one was caused by tobacco industry irresponsibility," said Hart. "Many of us are angry that the responsibility for a major epidemic continues to be placed on the individual. We think it's time for executives behind the deceptive marketing practices to be placed behind bars."

Hart claims that the "blame-the-victim-strategy" permits legislators to avoid facing the real problem: confronting the tobacco and advertising industries. "RODDS wants to change perceptions and is determined to change the rules," said Hart.

Hart, a 52 year old resident of Picton, has lost both a father and brother to tobacco industry-caused lung cancer. His brother died last spring after a painful but futile fight with the disease.

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For more information leave a message for Ron Hart, at the Skyline Hotel, Ottawa at (613) 237-3600 or phone the RODDS office at (613) 393-3030.

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