

NEWS RELEASE

Fire-Safe Cigarettes

Ottawa, July 16, 1996 -- The Canada Safety Council is recommending to the Federal Health Minister David Dingwall that the issue of fire safe-cigarettes become a priority matter within his Department. It has been determined that it is technically and commercially feasible to develop a cigarette that will self-extinguish and hence be far less likely to ignite furniture and mattresses. In the U.S., it has been established that both laboratory and field studies indicate that some lower ignition propensity cigarettes already exist in the marketplace. Characteristics that have been associated with improved performance include lower paper porosity, smaller circumference, shorter filter and lower tobacco density.

"Cigarettes were responsible for about 120 of the 417 fire fatalities in Canada in 1993, such a high number, more than one in four, is simply not acceptable," says Canada Safety Council president Emile Therien. "In addition, smoker's material and open flame accounted for over 13,000 fires with a dollar loss of \$211 million."

Mr. Therien contends that the lack of government action to regulate the ignition propensity of cigarettes may be undermining the efforts of those working in the public safety and fire prevention fields. He says the Canada Safety Council would be pleased to assist Health Canada in matters leading to the development of fire-safe cigarettes. A copy of his letter dated July 15 to the Hon. David Dingwall is attached.

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Hon. David Dingwall, P.C, M.P.

Minister of Health

House of Commons

Parliament Hill

Ottawa, ON 3 pages

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Dear Sir,

I have in hand a copy of your letter dated April 4, 1996 addressed to Sean O'Connell of Richmond, British Columbia on the issue of fire-safe cigarettes. The Canada Safety Council previously corresponded with your department on this issue.

For your information, a letter dated July 8, 1993 from Richard Gann, Ph.D., Chairman, Technical Advisory Group (TAG), Fire-Safe Cigarette Act of 1990 and Chief, Fire Science Division, Building and Fire Research Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Commerce to the Hon. Jacqueline Jones-Smith, Chair, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission stated: "In conclusion, the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) by a vote of 11 to 4 believes that sufficient technology and information is available to deem practical the development of a performance standard to reduce cigarette ignition propensity."

It should be noted that all dissenting votes were representatives of the cigarette industry.

The letter also says that, "eleven members of the TAG find that a net benefit to the nation can be derived from the introduction of low ignition propensity cigarettes into commerce, assuming the incremental adverse health effects do not outweigh the fire safety benefits." In this regard Mr. Gann's letter states that, "cigarettes of reduced ignition propensity are already being marketed in the same price range of the most popular brands."

In the U.S. some feasibility studies indicate that such products may produce a different mixture of constituents from that of ordinary cigarettes. We are sensitive to this. However, in light of the fact that such products are already on the market, any concern that adverse health effects outweigh fire safety benefits must be discarded, discounted and rendered insignificant.

We are aware of the agreement reached between Health Canada and the upholstered furniture industry to make their products less prone to cigarette ignition. This is a voluntary program and not all industry members comply with the fire safety standards established by the Canadian Council of Furniture Manufacturers. In addition, the program may not apply to

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aftermarket re-upholstered furniture products. A significant issue and concern relates to the millions of upholstered items already in the marketplace, before the Canadian furniture industry launched its program on January 1, 1987.

Our recent News Release, Fire Losses in Canada - 1993, points out that cigarettes are very much over-represented in fire statistics. Cigarettes were responsible for about 120 of the 417 fire fatalities in Canada in 1993; such a high number, more than one in four, is simply not acceptable. In addition, smoker's material and open flame accounted for over 13,000 fires with a dollar loss of \$211 million. Lack of government action to regulate the ignition propensity of cigarettes may be undermining the efforts of those working in the public safety and fire prevention fields.

In its August 1993 report to Congress, the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire-Safe Cigarette Act of 1990, concluded that it is practicable

to develop a performance standard to reduce cigarette ignition propensity. However, it stated that the effort to achieve such an objective was beyond both the jurisdiction and the technical capability of the agency.

Many organizations--including the National Fire Protection Association and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (both of which have members in Canada)--support and have made representations in favour of the development of Fire-Safe Cigarettes. In Canada, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and Fire Prevention Canada have been on record in support of the development of these products.

In light of the disproportionately high number of fire deaths caused by cigarettes, we recommend that the issue of fire-safe cigarettes become a priority matter within your Department. The Canada Safety Council would be pleased to assist your officials in matters leading to the development of these products.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

EJT:jml Emile-J Therien

Encl. President

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c.c. Non-Smokers' Rights Association (fax: 230-9454)

c.c. Association of Canadian Fire Marshals/Fire Commissioners

c.c. International Association of Fire Fighters, Canadian Office (fax: 567-8986)

c.c. Physicians for a Smoke Free Canada (fax: 567-2730)

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