



For immediate release

Press release

Quebec Court of Appeal rules against tobacco companies

Montreal, March 1, 2019 - Today five judges of the Quebec Court of Appeal rendered a unanimous historic judgement of **almost \$14 billion** and upheld the no less historic ruling of the Quebec Superior Court that the tobacco industry- Imperial Tobacco, Rothmans, Benson & Hedges and JTI-MacDonald- had for more than 50 years systematically lied distorted the truth, minimized and trivialized the dangers of tobacco.

The Appeal Court confirmed that the tobacco companies had collectively perfected a program of disinformation aimed at undermining all information contrary to their interests. The court also found that the companies had intentionally and in bad faith created a false scientific controversy and used misleading publicity strategies with the goal of deceiving the public.

With this judgment, the 100,000 Quebec victims who are class members in the Blais class and who have been diagnosed with lung cancer, throat cancer or emphysema are entitled to compensation. "This is a total victory for the victims," said **Mario Bujold**, strategic advisor to the Quebec Council on Tobacco and Health (CQTS), the organizations which represented the victims in this case.

The Court of Appeal also recognized that there was a legitimate cause of action in the class action case named for Cecilia Létourneau. The Appeal Court confirmed that it was a product without real benefits except to satisfy the addiction it causes.

This is a great victory for **Lise Blais**, the widow of Jean-Yves Blais, in whose name the class action was filed. "I am very happy with the judgment" she said. "I am also sad that my husband, whose life was cut short by the secrets and dishonesty of the companies, was not able to enjoy this victory. Like thousands of other victims, he did not live long enough to see the outcome of this trial." Jean-Yves Blais died of lung cancer in 2012 after many years of suffering and shortly after the trial began.

A global precedent

Me André Lespérance, one of the lawyers lead the class action, noted the historic importance of the ruling. "Five judges of Quebec's highest court have just signaled to the world that the severity of the lower court ruling was justified, given their wrongful behaviour and continual lying from the 1950s about the dangers of their products. By setting a global precedent for compensatory damages in the context of a class action, this ruling may inspire similar other jurisdictions. **Bruce Johnston**, who also represented the victims in this case, says justice has been done. "For more than 20 years, tobacco companies have been trying to avoid responsibility by distorting the evidence in this case. The Court of Appeal today made clear that no industry is above the law and that these companies must compensate those who were harmed by their products.

Tobacco victims (or their estate) who believe they are entitled to compensation in this class action are invited to register online at recourstabac.com. To date, **more than 18 000 registrations** have been received.

About the law firms representing the victims

The lawyers who led this epic struggle were from three law firms: Trudel Johnston & Lespérance, Kugler Kandestin and De Grandpré Chait.

About the Quebec Council on Tobacco and Health

"Towards a Tobacco-Free Quebec" is the mission statement of the Quebec Council on Tobacco and Health, which has worked for 42 years to mobilize stakeholders from various sectors to reduce and prevent tobacco consumption in Quebec. In addition to representing the victims of the CQTS-Blais appeal, this non-profit organization coordinates a number of smoking prevention and cessation programs for the public, in schools and in businesses.

More information on this class action is also available at quebecsanstabac.ca/cqts/recours-collectifs.

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The following will be available for interviews:

M. Mario Bujold, strategic advisor to the Quebec Council on Smoking and Health
Mrs Lise Blais, victims' representative,

Mr André Lespérance, Mr Bruce Johnston and Mr Philippe Trudel, of Trudel Johnston & Lespérance.

Renseignements : Claire Harvey, relations médias

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