

# RAISE TOBACCO TAX for SMOKING CESSATION

Tobacco is addictive and lethal. It is proven that one in every two smokers will be killed by smoking. Although smoking prevalence in Hong Kong has been dropped gradually from 23.3% in 1982 to 11.1% in 2010, there are still more than 650,000 smokers in Hong Kong. To safeguard public health, we should support the Government to raise tobacco tax for smoking cessation.

## Motivate Smokers to Quit

The Thematic Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department showed that nearly one fifth of successful quitters gave up smoking on their own accord because "cigarettes or other forms of tobacco products are too expensive". The effectiveness of raising the price of tobacco products is obvious.

## Prevent Youth from Smoking

Every 10% increase in the price of a packet of cigarettes would result in a 4% decrease in tobacco consumption in high-income regions like Hong Kong. According to a research conducted by The University of Hong Kong, the smoking rate of secondary schools students dropped from 6.9% in 2008 to 3.4% in 2011 after the significant increase in tobacco tax. It is found that young people are more sensitive to price.

## Increase Demand for Smoking Cessation Services

Significant increase in tobacco tax is proven to be effective in encouraging smokers to quit. The number of calls to the smoking cessation hotline of the Department of Health reached 240 on the day and the day after the announcement of tobacco tax rise in 2011 which increased by six times as compared with the same period in 2010. The annual usage of the hotline increased to more than 20,000 in 2011.

## Reduce Economic Loss

Tobacco contains more than 7,000 chemicals and over 70 of them are carcinogens. In Hong Kong nearly 7,000 people died of tobacco annually and 1,324 of them are non-smokers. It brought HK\$5.3 billion economic loss to Hong Kong, which included the loss of productivity and health expenditure. To reduce loss, increase in tobacco tax is indispensable.

## Tobacco tax increase leads to a surge in cigarette smuggling?

**NO!**

The most effective way to tackle the problem of cigarette smuggling at the root is to strengthen law enforcement and publicity, licence all retailers who wish to sell cigarettes and educate the public on the illegitimacy of illicit cigarette. Canada and Sweden attempted to combat cigarette smuggling in the 90s by reducing the tobacco tax which resulted in a hike of tobacco consumption and number of contraband cigarettes seizure. In fact, the problem of cigarette smuggling in low-tax regions still exists. It is related to the strength of law enforcement, coordination of tracking system and effectiveness of penalty.



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