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**TOBACCO TAX AMENDMENTS TO ENCOURAGE SMOKING REDUCTION**

WHITEHORSE – The government is set to table amendments to tobacco tax legislation, which subject to legislative approval, would see significant increase in tobacco product taxes.

“Studies show increasing tobacco taxes combat rising smoking rates and deter young people from taking-up smoking,” Premier Dennis Fentie said.

The new rates, scheduled to come into force July 1, will vary depending on the type of tobacco product. Tax will go from 13.2 cents per cigarette to 21 cents per cigarette. Tax on loose tobacco products will increase from 4.68 cents per gram to 21 cents per gram.

“The negative impacts tobacco smoke have on human health are well known,” Fentie said. “We’re the only jurisdiction in Canada showing increased smoking rates and we want to see that change.

“Government will be looking to help current smokers quit by assisting people with their smoking cessation efforts,” Fentie said.

Yukon has the third highest rate of smoking in Canada, behind only Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, according to Statistics Canada.

A total of 30.4 per cent of Yukoners age 12 and older smoke, compared to the national average of 21.8 per cent.

Yukon currently has the lowest tax rate on tobacco and the fourth lowest tax rate on cigarettes. There have been only four changes to the Tobacco Tax Act since the legislation was created in 1974.

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