

Tobacco Industry Campaign Contributions in Ontario, 1990-95

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Studies in the U.S. have shown that campaign contributions from the tobacco industry can influence legislators' tobacco-related policy decisions.^{1,2} To our knowledge, there have been no published accounts of tobacco industry contributions to Canadian legislators. As part of a broader study examining Canadian legislators' attitudes toward tobacco control policies and possible factors that influence those attitudes, we have documented campaign contributions by the tobacco industry to Ontario provincial politicians between 1990 and 1995.

In Ontario, contributions can be made to candidates running for election (maximum of \$750 per campaign), to riding associations (maximum of \$750 annually), and to political parties (maximum of \$4,000 annually, with an additional \$4,000 permitted during election periods). Contributions can also be made during leadership campaigns, with no contribution limit. If the cumulative contribution for the year is greater than \$100, *the Election Finances Act, 1986* requires that the contributor's name be identified and made publicly accessible.

METHODS

We recorded tobacco industry contributions to current Ontario legislators (i.e., those serving as of August 1996, n=130),

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riding associations, political parties, and leadership contestants for the years 1990 to 1995. Contribution information was obtained from the office of the Commission on Election Finances. The 1996 contributions were not available at the time of data collection.

In our review, we searched for contributions from Imperial Tobacco Ltd., RJR-Macdonald Inc., Rothmans, Benson & Hedges Inc., and their parent and holding companies.

RESULTS

Ten current Ontario legislators or their riding associations received contributions from the tobacco industry at some point between 1990 and 1995 (Table I). Eighty-seven percent of the dollar value of these contributions was made to riding associations, and 79% was made in 1995, an election year. Eight of the legislators who received (or whose riding associations

received) tobacco industry contributions have served as ministers or parliamentary assistants to ministers.

The tobacco companies that contributed were Imasco Retail Inc. (\$970) and Imasco Enterprises Inc. (\$150), holding companies of Imasco Ltd., the parent company of Imperial Tobacco Ltd.; RJR-Macdonald (\$500); Rothmans, Benson & Hedges (\$2,100); and Rothmans Inc. (\$1,629.20). Tobacco industry contributions totalled \$5,349.20. The contribution by each tobacco company represented between 10% and 80% of its maximum allowable contribution to a candidate and riding association in a given year.

From 1990 to 1995, two Ontario parties received tobacco industry contributions: the Progressive Conservative Party (P.C.) and the Liberal Party (Table II). These contributions totalled \$89,814.60. For the years 1990 to 1995 combined, Imasco Ltd. contributed the greatest percentage of its allowable contributions, with 54% to the

TABLE I
Tobacco Industry Contributions to Current Ontario Legislators and Riding Associations, 1990-95

Legislator or Riding Association	Contribution Year	Tobacco Industry Contribution	Max. Allowable Contribution per Contributor*	Tobacco Ind. Contribution as a Percent of Max. Allowable Contributions	Total Contributions made to Legislator and Riding Ass'n
A	1995	\$270.00	\$2,250.00	12%	\$106,599.00
B	1995	\$407.30	\$1,500.00	27%	\$59,547.13
C	1995	\$750.00	\$1,500.00	50%	\$95,893.49
D	1995	\$150.00	\$1,500.00	10%	\$48,600.00
E	1995	\$407.30	\$1,500.00	27%	\$134,053.00
F	1995	\$750.00	\$1,500.00	50%	\$96,633.15
G	1995	\$407.30	\$1,500.00	27%	\$49,181.32
H	1995	\$700.00	\$1,500.00	47%	\$61,633.98
I	1995	\$407.30	\$1,500.00	27%	\$86,754.81
	1994	\$600.00	\$750.00	80%	\$144,114.00
J	1990	\$500.00	\$1,500.00	33%	\$58,870.00

* Maximum allowable contributions per contributor vary between legislators depending on the number of times they were candidates running in an election.

TABLE II
Tobacco Industry Contributions to Ontario Political Parties, 1990-95*

Year	Imasco Ltd.		Rothmans Inc.		Rothmans, To P.C.s	Benson & Hedges To Liberals	Total
	To P.C.s	To Liberals	To P.C.s	To Liberals			
1995	\$8,000.00 (67%)	\$14,000.00 (117%)†	\$7,814.60 (65%)	0	\$4,000.00 (33%)	\$4,000.00 (33%)	\$37,814.60
1994	\$8,000.00 (100%)	\$4,000.00 (50%)	0	0	\$4,000.00 (50%)	0	\$16,000.00
1993	\$4,000.00 (33%)	\$4,000.00 (33%)	0	0	\$4,000.00 (33%)	0	\$12,000.00
1992	\$4,000.00 (50%)	\$4,000.00 (50%)	0	0	0	0	\$8,000.00
1991	\$4,000.00 (100%)	\$4,000.00 (100%)	0	0	0	0	\$8,000.00
1990	0	\$8,000.00 (100%)	0	0	0	0	\$8,000.00
Total	\$28,000.00 (54%)	\$38,000.00 (73%)	\$7,814.60 (15%)	0	\$12,000.00 (23%)	\$4,000.00 (8%)	\$89,814.60

* Each company's contribution, expressed as a percentage of its maximum allowable contribution, is presented in brackets. The maximum allowable contributions from a given company to an Ontario political party for the years 1990 to 1995 were \$8,000, \$4,000, \$8,000, \$12,000, \$8,000, and \$12,000, respectively.

† According to the Commission on Election Finances Office, there was an over-contribution to the Liberal Party from Imasco Ltd. in 1995 of \$2,000, which was intended to be divided between three riding associations.

Conservatives and 73% to the Liberals. Total tobacco industry contributions increased from \$8,000 in each of 1990, 1991, and 1992 to \$12,000 in 1993, \$16,000 in 1994, and \$37,814.60 in 1995.

A review of the contributions made to candidates running in leadership campaigns between 1990 and 1995 indicates that only one contribution came from a tobacco company (\$1,000 from Rothmans, Benson & Hedges in 1990).

DISCUSSION

The data indicate that the tobacco industry contributed to fewer than 8% of current Ontario legislators or riding associations and to only one leadership contestant at some point between 1990 and 1995. In comparison, studies in the U.S. have found that 69% of U.S. Congressmen,¹ 93% of California legislators,² 59% of North Carolina legislators,³ and 24% of Texas legislators³ received tobacco industry contributions in 1991-92. This difference between countries may be partially explained by their political sys-

tems; for example, U.S. legislators have more freedom to vote independently of their party,⁴ and the rules governing campaign financing vary across jurisdictions.^{5,6}

As expected, tobacco industry contributions to political parties were lower in Ontario than at the federal level (e.g., \$37,815 vs. \$141,811 for 1995). Although there are no contribution limits federally, tobacco industry contributions represented similar proportions of each party's total contributions federally (up to 0.75%) and in Ontario (up to 0.80%) in 1995.

In this study, we were unable to assess personal contributions from tobacco company executives because of the difficulty in establishing whether the contributor was the tobacco company official or someone else with the same name. Neither did we investigate contributions by other subsidiaries of the parent companies, such as Shoppers Drug Mart (owned by Imasco Ltd.) because such contributions may not reflect tobacco interests. Furthermore, the Ontario New Democratic Party, an unlikely recipient of tobacco industry contributions,⁵ was in power from 1990 to 1995. Perhaps tobacco industry contributions

would have been higher if another party had been in power during the period of analysis.

In Canada, the tobacco industry may exert substantial political influence in ways other than campaign contributions, such as through sponsorship of sporting and cultural events and through personal relationships with legislators.⁷ The tobacco industry has also had strong political connections;⁸ for example, in 1988 Mr. William Neville was both spokesperson for the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council⁹ and a speech-writer and strategist for the Prime Minister.¹⁰ Future research should explore the activities of the tobacco industry in more detail to provide a clearer picture of the nature and extent of its influence on the political process in Canada.

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