

May 15, 2024

Provincial Contraband Tobacco Seizures from September 2023 – April 2024)

April 22, 2024 (Edmonton)

- Following a three-month investigation, AGLC Tobacco Enforcement Unit were granted a search warrant to a south Edmonton commercial property. 60 pallets (22,260,000 cigarettes or 111,300 cartons) of contraband tobacco were seized.
- The seized contraband tobacco has a combined total of \$6.6 million in provincial lost tax revenue and a retail loss of \$18 million.
- The matter is still under investigation and charges are pending.

April 11, 2024 (Lethbridge)

- Search warrants were executed on a storage unit and a residence in Lethbridge.
- 252,240 contraband cigarettes (1,261 cartons) of a retail value of \$208,098 and more than \$25,000 in Canadian currency was seized resulting in charges. The total provincial tax lost was \$75,560.
- Vendon Sharp of Lethbridge was charged with possession of unstamped tobacco and fraud over \$5,000.

March 20, 2024 (Calgary)

- Following a two-week investigation, search warrants were executed on a residence and the Simple Convenience store in Calgary.
- A total of 14,780 contraband cigarettes (74 cartons) with a retail value of \$12,210 and 46,500 grams of shisha were seized. The potential provincial lost tax revenue was \$23,621.
- Angosom Beraki of Calgary was charged with section 121.1 CC, possession of unstamped tobacco and fraud over \$5,000.

February 16, 2024 (Calgary)

- Three individuals were observed in possession and transferring 80,000 contraband cigarettes (400 cartons) with a retail value of \$66,000.
- The potential provincial lost tax revenue was \$22,000.
- Matthew Krebs of Calgary, Jarit McCallum of Saskatoon and Chantel Dombrowsky of Saskatoon were each charged with one count of possession of unstamped tobacco and one count of fraud over \$5,000.

January 24, 2024 (Edmonton area)

- Following a four-month investigation, an approximate retail value of \$7 million in contraband tobacco products was seized by AGLC's Tobacco Enforcement Unit. A total of 8.7 million cigarettes and 15,000 grams of contraband shisha tobacco was seized.
- The seizure took place at a rural property and two residential properties all located in Edmonton. Investigators were acting on information that Alberta residents were involved in the trafficking of contraband tobacco products.
- The seized contraband tobacco has a combined total of \$2.4 million in potential provincial lost tax revenue.
- The matter is still under investigation and charges are pending.

January 5, 2024 (Calgary)

- After a month-long investigation, search warrants were executed at a residence, vehicles and the TTK Convenience store in Calgary.
- A total of 915,060 contraband cigarettes with a retail value of \$251,642; 19,000 grams of shisha; 36 ASP batons; and 18 cannisters of bear spray were seized.
- The potential provincial lost tax revenue was \$259,480.
- Teweldebrhan Kidane of Calgary and Feven Tesfay of Calgary were charged with possession of unstamped tobacco and fraud over \$5,000.

September 27, 2023 (Edmonton)

- A three-day investigation in the northwest Edmonton identified a commercial property being used to store and distribute illegal cigarettes in the Edmonton area.
- A search warrant was issued with 2.8 million cigarettes with a retail value of \$2.3 million seized along with 35,000 grams of contraband shisha tobacco.
- The contraband tobacco has a combined total of \$784,438 in potential provincial lost tax revenue.
- Esays Okibmichael of Edmonton and Atewebirhan Ghirmu of Edmonton have been charged. Their first court appearance is slated June 2024 for charges of selling, distributing, and transporting of contraband tobacco and fraud over \$5,000.

September 7, 2023 (Calgary)

- A two-week investigation resulted in search warrants executed at the Bowness Convenience store, the Harvest Convenience, as well as a residence located in Calgary.
- 35,980 contraband cigarettes (180 cartons) with a retail value of \$29,700 were seized. The total seized is approximately \$9,895 in potential provincial lost tax revenue.
- Brijeshkumar Dabhoya of Calgary and Ravikumar Patel of Calgary were charged with possession of unstamped tobacco and fraud over \$5,000.

AGLC Tobacco Enforcement Unit Executed Warrants at Retailers in Edmonton

- On January 5, 2024, three search warrants executed at three retailers in Edmonton: 5 Star Gift and Smoke Shop, 7 Days Convenience Store and Mini Max Convenience Store.
- Approximately 15,840 contraband cigarettes (79 cartons) with a retail value of \$13,035 were seized along with unstamped cigars and shisha tobacco from these three retailers.
- Public complaints were received by the AGLC Tobacco Enforcement Unit who then initiated the investigations. The potential provincial lost tax revenue is valued at \$5,843.

For the nine-month period ending in April 30, 2024, AGLC seized the following in contraband tobacco products (retail average rate per carton cigarettes =\$165):

- Over 35 million in contraband cigarettes with a retail value of over \$28.2 million.
- 115,000 grams of contraband shisha.
- More than \$10.1 million in potential lost provincial tax revenue (cigarettes and shisha combined).

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