

Canada appeals court upholds landmark tobacco ruling

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The trial against the three tobacco companies in Canada's Quebec province began in March 2012, more than a decade after it was first launched

Quebec's appeals court on Friday upheld a historic ruling ordering three tobacco firms to pay Can\$15.5 billion (US\$11.6 billion) to smokers in

the Canadian province who claimed they were never warned about the health risks associated with smoking.

Imperial Tobacco Canada, a subsidiary of British American Tobacco, Rothmans Benson & Hedges and JTI-MacDonald have one month to launch an eventual appeal before Canada's Supreme Court.

In June 2015, the Superior Court of Quebec ruled that the three companies should pay the whopping amount to tens of thousands of smokers suffering from emphysema, [lung cancer](#) or throat cancer.

According to [media reports](#), accruing interest will bring the final amount to more than Can\$17 billion.

The two class action lawsuits behind the award, which were originally filed in 1998, affected nearly one million smokers or ex-smokers, some of whom had been consuming tobacco since the 1960s. The trial only began in March 2012.

"We are disappointed with today's decision," Imperial Tobacco Canada spokesman Eric Gagnon told reporters. "As the ruling in the lower court showed, Canadian consumers know the risks associated with tobacco use. We should not be held responsible."

Lawyers for the plaintiffs meanwhile celebrated the "historic" ruling, going so far as to call it a "masterpiece."

"The ruling reached the same conclusions as did the lower court, solidifies them and confirms that the companies conspired for 50 years to lie to the public," one of the attorneys, Andre L'Esperance, told journalists.

"This is a total victory, on all fronts," added his colleague Philippe

Trudel.

The lower court had ruled that the companies failed in their general duty "not to cause injury to another person" and to inform their customers of the risks associated with their products.

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