



Canada: Independent c-store coalition kicks off “SOS - Save Our Stores” campaign

Ontario's independent convenience store owners are banding together to protest provincial government policies they say are driving them out of business.

The store owners' coalition is spearheaded by the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association (OKBA), the largest organization of independent convenience stores in the province. Over the last 10 years more than 500 OKBA members have closed down their businesses as a result of the ever-worsening business environment in Ontario.

The campaign focuses on several issues that they believe are hurting independent convenience store owners:

- Contraband Tobacco – government inaction on illegal contraband tobacco sales are hurting licensed tobacco retailers, and robbing government of more than \$1Billion in lost tax revenue per year.
- Beverage Alcohol Sales – while other provinces have opened up beverage alcohol sales in convenience stores, Ontario will not allow it.
- Excessive Red Tape – increased government red tape and regulation while sales drop and illegal competition grows.
- Electricity Rates – massive increases to small business electricity rates and no long-term sustainable plan to control costs.
- Increase to Minimum Wage – the massive increase in minimum wage will result in longer hours for store owners and less youth employment.

The SOS campaign will be asking politicians from all three major parties to commit to policy platforms in next year's election that will help the organization "Save Our Stores". Every day, more than 3 million Ontarians shop in one of the more than 8,000 convenience stores across the province.