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18:51 British Columbia says won't cut cigarette taxes

VANCOUVER, Feb 8 (Reuter) - The Canadian province of British Columbia said it is rejecting the federal government's invitation to lower provincial cigarette taxes to combat smuggling.

The federal government said earlier it would cut its taxes on cigarettes by C\$5 a carton and match dollar-for-dollar any tax reduction made by provinces over C\$5 up to C\$10.

But British Columbia opposes the idea because it believes it will encourage smoking and drive up health care costs as well as eliminating precious revenues. "We won't go along. We won't cut taxes," said provincial spokesman Phil Atkinson.

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