

No.  
Vancouver Registry

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Between:

KENNETH KNIGHT

Plaintiff

AND:

IMPERIAL TOBACCO CANADA LIMITED

Defendant

Brought under the *Class Proceedings Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c.50

**STATEMENT OF CLAIM**

1. The Plaintiff, Kenneth Knight, is a resident of Roberts Creek, British Columbia.
2. The Defendant, Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited, is Canada's largest tobacco company, manufacturing nearly 70% of the cigarettes sold in this country. The Defendant is a company incorporated pursuant to the laws of Canada and has a registered office at 3711 St. Antoine Street West, Montreal, Quebec.
3. This is a proposed class action brought pursuant to the *Trade Practices Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 457 (the "TPA") and the *Class Proceedings Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c.50 on behalf of persons who made purchases in British Columbia of "light" and "mild" cigarettes manufactured, sold and/or distributed by the Defendant. The class is intended to include persons who are "consumers" within the meaning of section 1 of the TPA. Excluded from the proposed class are directors, officers and employees of the Defendant.

4. The terms “light” and “mild” are descriptors that the Defendant uses to market certain brands of its cigarettes. In this claim, the terms “light” and “mild” encompass the following and similar descriptors: “extra light”, “ultra light”, “special mild”, “extra mild” and “ultra mild”. Cigarettes marketed by the Defendant with these descriptors are hereinafter referred to as “Light Cigarettes” or “Lights” some of which are listed in Appendix A attached to this Statement of Claim. In the course of its business, the Defendant solicited, offered, advertised and promoted the sale of its Light Cigarettes to consumers in British Columbia. As such, the Defendant is a “supplier” within the meaning of section 1 of the TPA.

5. Each purchase by the Plaintiff and by class members of the Defendant’s Light Cigarettes for personal use is a “consumer transaction” within the meaning of section 1 of the TPA. Each solicitation and promotion by the Defendant with respect to the purchase by consumers of the Defendant’s Light Cigarettes is a “consumer transaction” within the meaning of section 1 of the TPA.

6. By the late 1960’s, scientific studies suggested that smoking cigarettes with higher tar and nicotine levels might be correlated with an increased risk of developing smoking-related diseases. These studies threatened the Defendant’s continued profitability. The Defendant responded by publicly denying that smoking caused disease and by undertaking public misinformation campaigns which sought to create doubt in the public mind about the negative health effects of smoking, the magnitude of the risk of smoking, and the relative safety of their ‘filtered’ brands versus cigarettes generally.

7. The Defendant further responded by designing, developing and marketing its Light Cigarettes. All cigarettes release numerous harmful toxins into the cigarette smoke including, but not limited to, tar, nicotine, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide and benzene (herein referred to collectively as “toxic emissions”). Each of the Defendant’s Light Cigarettes contains the descriptor “light” or “mild” in the brand name. This descriptor is intended to convey, and does convey, to consumers an implicit message of health reassurance. This message is that the Defendant’s Light Cigarettes are safer or less harmful than regular cigarettes,

that they release significantly less toxic emissions, and that smokers who are worried about their health may switch to Lights instead of quitting or as a graduated step in the consumer's effort to quit smoking.

8. The Defendant's Lights are not less harmful, nor do they transmit significantly fewer toxic emissions to the smoker. The Defendant designed its Lights in such a way that the standard testing machines used to measure toxic emissions would record lower levels than the levels that are actually delivered to the smoker. The Defendant thereby achieved apparent support for its claim that its Lights are "light" or "mild" and that they deliver significantly lower levels of toxic emissions, including tar and nicotine, as compared to regular cigarettes. The designation of the Defendant's Light Cigarettes as "light" or "mild" had the capability, tendency or effect of being deceptive or misleading. The Defendant published the machine read toxic emission levels, and specifically the levels of tar and nicotine, of its Light Cigarettes in promotional material and on the cigarette packages. The publication of those levels had the capability, tendency or effect of being deceptive or misleading.

9. The so-called lowered toxic emission deliveries of the Defendant's Light Cigarettes were unrelated to benign changes in the content of the tobacco in its Lights, but rather depended on changes in cigarette design and composition that deliver lower levels of toxic emissions under machine testing conditions while continuing to deliver high levels of toxic emissions to smokers under normal smoking conditions. The changes include the addition of tiny vent holes on or around the cigarette filter and the alteration of the materials used in filters and cigarette papers in order to dilute the toxic emissions of smoke per puff as measured by the industry standard testing machines. These changes are negated by smokers of Light Cigarettes through a phenomenon known as "compensation." Compensation is the tendency of smokers of Light Cigarettes to block the vent holes with their lips or fingers, inhale more deeply, puff more frequently, hold the smoke in their lungs for longer and smoke more cigarettes.

10. The Defendant conducted its own tests of its Light Cigarettes that revealed that the actual amounts of toxic emissions delivered to the smoker under normal use are substantially higher

than the levels read by the testing machines. The Defendant failed to make timely disclosure to consumers of the existence and results of those tests. Additionally, the Defendant failed to disclose that the smoke produced by its Lights is more genotoxic (causing genetic and chromosomal damage) per milligram of tar than regular cigarettes. The failure to make these disclosures had the capability, tendency or effect of being deceptive or misleading.

11. The Defendant engaged in numerous deceptive acts or practices in the solicitation, offer, advertisement and promotion of its Light Cigarettes contrary to the provisions of the TPA. In particular, the Defendant:

- (a) stated numbers for toxic emissions levels, and specifically levels of tar and nicotine, for its Light Cigarettes that did not reflect the actual deliveries of toxic emissions to smokers under normal smoking conditions and that thereby had the capability, tendency or effect of deceiving or misleading consumers;
- (b) stated numbers for toxic emissions levels, and specifically levels of tar and nicotine, for its Light Cigarettes that had the capability, tendency or effect of deceiving or misleadingly the consumer as to the relative levels of toxic emissions, including tar and nicotine, of the Defendant's Light Cigarettes in comparison with regular cigarettes;
- (c) used the descriptors "light" and "mild" in the marketing of its Light cigarettes which had the capability, tendency or effect of conveying a deceptive or misleading message of health reassurance to consumers;
- (d) failed to disclose the material fact that the so-called lowered toxic emission deliveries to its Light Cigarettes were unrelated to benign changes in the content of the tobacco in its Lights, but rather depended on changes in cigarette design and composition that deliver lower levels of toxic emissions under machine testing conditions while continuing to deliver high levels of toxic emissions to smokers under normal smoking conditions;

(e) failed to disclose the material fact that the techniques employed by the Defendant that purportedly reduce the levels of tar in its Light Cigarettes increase the harmful biological effects, including mutagenicity (genetic or chromosomal damage) caused by the tar ingested by the consumer;

(f) failed to disclose the material fact that the vent holes on Light Cigarettes are in locations where they might be covered or blocked by the smoker's lips and/or fingers under normal use, thereby increasing the level of toxic emissions delivered to the consumer;

(g) failed to mark the vent holes or to otherwise disclose their existence or location, so that smokers could attempt to smoke the cigarettes in a manner that would allow them to obtain the claimed reductions in toxic emissions;

(h) failed to disclose the material fact that smoking the Defendant's Lights with the vent holes blocked results in the smoker receiving an increased amount of toxic emissions, including tar and nicotine, and that those levels might not be significantly lower than the amounts of those substances the smoker would receive from a 'regular' cigarette;

(i) failed to disclose the material fact that smoking the Defendant's Lights with increased puff volume, frequency or duration results in the smoker receiving an increased amount of toxic emissions, including tar and nicotine, and that those levels might not be significantly lower than the amounts of those substances the smoker would receive from a 'regular' cigarette;

(j) failed to instruct the smoker, on the packaging or elsewhere, on how to smoke the cigarettes correctly in order to obtain the claimed lowered toxic emissions, including avoidance of blocking the vent holes and increased puff volume, frequency and duration;

(k) failed to disclose the material fact that the smoke produced from its Light Cigarettes is not less harmful to the smoker, nor is it less harmful to persons exposed to second-hand smoke;

(l) failed to disclose the material fact that the Defendant manipulated the design and content of its Light Cigarettes so as to increase the nicotine levels delivered to the consumer under normal smoking conditions; and

(m) failed to disclose the material fact of the effects of Defendant's manipulation of the nicotine content of its Light Cigarettes.

12. The Plaintiff purchased and consumed approximately one and a half packs a day of the Defendant's Light Cigarettes in British Columbia for a period of approximately 17 years. The Plaintiff did not have knowledge of the conduct by the Defendant alleged in this claim, or of any facts from which it might reasonably be concluded that the Defendant was so acting, or which would have lead to the discovery of such actions, until a few months prior to the commencement of this action. The Defendant willfully concealed material facts relating to the cause of action asserted in this claim and in particular willfully concealed the facts alleged in paragraph 11 of this Statement of Claim.

13. The Defendant has unfairly and unjustly profited from its deceptive acts and practices with regard to its solicitation, offer, advertisement and promotion of its Light Cigarettes.

14. The Plaintiff seeks a declaration pursuant to section 18(1)(a) of the TPA that the Defendant's acts or practices as described in paragraph 11 of this Statement of Claim are deceptive acts or practices.

15. The Plaintiff seeks a permanent injunction pursuant to section 18(1)(b) of the TPA restraining the Defendant from engaging or attempting to engage in the deceptive acts or practices described in paragraph 11 of this Statement of Claim.

16. The Plaintiff seeks an order pursuant to section 18(2) of the TPA requiring the Defendant to advertise to the public the particulars of any judgment, declaration, order or injunction against it in this action on terms and conditions the court considers reasonable and just.

17. The Plaintiff seeks statutory compensation for the class pursuant to sections 18(4) and 22(1) of the TPA, including an order that the Defendant refund all sums that class members paid to purchase the Light Cigarettes, or that the Defendant disgorge all revenue or profits which it made on account of Light Cigarettes purchased by class members, together with any further relief which may be available under the TPA.

18. The Plaintiff does not seek to recover damages for personal injuries suffered by any class member.

19. Smoking causes or contributes to numerous diseases and health problems including, but not limited to, coronary heart disease, cancer, vascular disease, bronchitis, emphysema, pneumonia, ulcers, gum disease, thyroid disease, miscarriages and impotence. Over 20% of all deaths in Canada are attributable to smoking. The health problems caused by smoking afflict not only smokers but also those exposed to second hand smoke. The economic and social cost to the class and to society in general has been substantial. The Defendant's conduct, as outlined in this Statement of Claim, has been sufficiently high handed, callous and reprehensible that an award of punitive damages is justified.

20. The Plaintiff pleads that it is unnecessary for the Plaintiff or any class member to prove that the Defendant's deceptive acts or practices caused such persons to purchase the Light Cigarettes in order to make out a claim for relief under sections 18(1), 18(4), 22(1)(b) and 22(1)(c) of the TPA.

21. In the alternative, the Plaintiff pleads that the Defendant's deceptive acts or practices did cause the Plaintiff and class members to purchase the Light Cigarettes such that a claim for relief is made out under sections 18 and 22 of the TPA.

22. The Plaintiff pleads that even if causation is a required element of a claim under sections 18 and 22 of the TPA, individual reliance on the deceptive acts or practices is not a required element of a cause of action under those sections.

23. In the alternative, the Plaintiff pleads that he and the class members relied on the Defendant to disclose all material facts regarding the Defendant's Light Cigarettes. The failure of the Defendant to state material facts as alleged in this Statement of Claim creates an assumption of reliance for the purpose of maintaining an action under the TPA.

24. In the further alternative, the Plaintiff pleads that the Defendant's deceptive acts or practices were calculated or would naturally tend to induce the Plaintiff and the class members to act upon the deceptive acts or practices when purchasing the Defendant's Light Cigarettes and that reliance on the Defendant's deceptive acts or practices may be inferred.

25. In the still further alternative, the Plaintiff pleads that he and the class members acted in reliance on the Defendant's deceptive acts or practices, to their detriment, when they purchased the Defendant's Light Cigarettes.

26. The Plaintiff claims, on his own behalf, and on behalf of the Class:

- (a) an order certifying the proceeding as a class proceeding;
- (b) a declaration pursuant to section 18(1)(a) of the TPA;
- (c) a permanent injunction pursuant to section 18(1)(b) of the TPA;
- (d) an order requiring the Defendant to advertise any adverse findings against it pursuant to section 18(2) of the TPA;



- (e) disgorgement and/or restitution by the Defendant pursuant to sections 18(4) and 22(1)(b) of the TPA;
- (e) damages pursuant to section 22(1)(a) of the TPA;
- (f) punitive and exemplary damages pursuant to section 22(1)(a) of the TPA;
- (g) the costs of administering and distributing an aggregate damage award;
- (h) costs pursuant to section 37(2) of the *Class Proceedings Act*, RSBC 1996, c. 50;
- (i) interest pursuant to the *Court Order Interest Act*, RSCB 1996, c. 79; and
- (j) such further and other relief this Honorable Court may find just.

PLACE OF TRIAL: Vancouver, British Columbia.

Dated at Vancouver, British Columbia, this 8<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2003.

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Solicitor for the Plaintiff

This statement of claim is filed and served by David A. Klein of the firm of Klein, Lyons, Barristers and Solicitors, whose place of business and address for service and delivery is at 1100 – 1333 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V6H 4C1.

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## Appendix A

### Some of the Defendant's Light Cigarette Brands

1. du Maurier Light
2. du Maurier Extra Light
3. du Maurier Ultra Light
4. du Maurier Special Mild
5. Matinée Extra Mild
6. Medallion Ultra Mild
7. Player's Light
8. Player's Light Smooth
9. Player's Extra Light