

TITLE: E-Cigarette Flavour Ban

TO: Board of Health

FROM: **Health Promotion Substance Use Prevention/Harm Reduction Team**

DATE: December 5, 2024

APPROVED BY: Dr. Natalie Bocking, Medical Officer of Health & CEO

In Camera? Yes No

Overview

- Youth vaping is a public health concern locally, provincially and nationally that requires a regulatory response.
- E-cigarette flavours are a key marketing strategy used to appeal to youth and a primary factor that draws youth to vaping products¹.
- While vaping has been advertised as a form of smoking cessation, research shows a strong link between vaping and the initiation of smoking combustible cigarettes².
- Health Canada has issued an Order Amending Schedules 2 and 3 of the Tobacco and Vaping Products Act to ban e-cigarette flavours.

Recommendations to the Board of Health:

THAT the Board of Health receive this briefing note for information AND THAT the Board of Health endorse sending a letter of support to Health Canada for Health Canada's Order Amending Schedules 2 and 3 of the Tobacco and Vaping Products Act (Flavours) and Standards for Vaping Products' Sensory Attributes Regulation to ban all E-cigarette flavours, including mint and menthol.

¹ Canadian Lung Association. "New Vaping Regulations a Positive Step Towards a Nicotine-Free Generation." [New vaping regulations: Steps in the right direction | Canadian Lung Association](#)

² Association Between E-Cigarette Use and Future Combustible Cigarette Use: Evidence from a Prospective Cohort of Youth and Young Adults, 2017–2019." ScienceDirect. [Association between e-cigarette use and future combustible cigarette use: Evidence from a prospective cohort of youth and young adults, 2017–2019 - ScienceDirect](#)

Issue

Flavoured e-cigarettes are highly popular among youth and play a significant role in their decision to start vaping³. In 2024, 9 out of 10 middle to high school students reported using vape flavours, the most popular being fruit, candy and mint³. Youth who use e-cigarettes are highly susceptible to developing a nicotine addiction as their still-developing brains may lead them to believe that they need nicotine to feel balanced³. Despite having no previous intention to smoke combustible cigarettes, studies have shown that vaping increases the likelihood of smoking onset⁴. Some research suggests that youth who vape are also 3.6 times more likely to start smoking tobacco later in life². Research indicates that youth who use e-cigarettes tend to view smoking as less harmful and less addictive compared to those who do not vape². This perception could ultimately cause a shift toward using combustible cigarettes². According to the Canadian Lung Association, 2 out of 3 youth ages 12 to 17 who vape and smoke began with vaping⁵. The Canada Gazette reports over 99% of e-cigarettes sold in Canada are flavoured⁶, making them particularly appealing due to their sweet and fruity flavours, which suppresses the harsh effects of nicotine⁷. Additionally, documents from the tobacco industry indicate that adolescents and young adults not only prefer flavoured tobacco products, but they are particularly vulnerable to them⁷.

Background

According to the 2023 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS), approximately 13% of high school students reported using an e-cigarette that year⁸. Additionally, among those youth who identified vaping in the past year, 87% reported vaping nicotine⁸. Nicotine levels in e-cigarettes have risen over the years, with many products containing nicotine salts³. These salts allow youth to ingest higher amounts of nicotine without the harshness associated with freebase nicotine³. The 2023 OSDUHS

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Why Youth Vape." [Why Youth Vape | Smoking and Tobacco Use | CDC](#)

⁴ Owotomo, O., Stritzel, H., & McCabe, S. E. (2020). Smoking intention and progression from e-cigarette use to cigarette smoking. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 146(6). [10.1542/peds.2020-002881](#)

⁵ Ban Flavoured Vapes." Lung Association. [Ban Flavoured Vapes \(lung.ca\)](#)

⁶ Canada Gazette. "Regulations Amending the Tobacco Products Regulations." 2021. [Canada Gazette, Part 1, Volume 155, Number 25: Order Amending Schedules 2 and 3 to the Tobacco and Vaping Products Act \(Flavours\)](#)

⁷ A Review of the Use and Appeal of Flavored Electronic Cigarettes." PubMed Central (PMC).

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6709993>⁸ Drug Use Trend Report 2023." Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). <https://www.camh.ca/en/>.

⁸ Drug Use Trend Report 2023." Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). <https://www.camh.ca/en/>.

survey shows that the percentage of students reporting vaping in the past year increases with grade, from 5 % of kids in grade 8 to 21.8% in grade 12⁸. Despite e-cigarettes being advertised as a tool for smoking cessation, the reality is that e-cigarette use is linked to the initiation of smoking, especially among youth². Furthermore, evidence shows that regardless of their intentions for vaping, youth who used e-cigarettes were 4 times more likely to start smoking combustible cigarettes one year later compared to those who had never vaped⁴. While those who smoke should have cessation options available, it is also important to disincentivize youth from being lured into vaping through flavours and other deceptive tactics.

Analysis

Flavoured e-cigarettes have been identified by Health Canada as one of the leading factors that has resulted in the rapid rise of youth vaping⁶. E-cigarettes are marketed to appeal to younger audiences, with over 16,000 unique flavours available on the market⁹. The Canadian Lung Association further highlights that mint and menthol are the second most desired flavours¹. They report that 70.3% of youth aged 15 to 19 prefer candy or fruity flavours, while 10.3% opt for mint or menthol. Similarly, among those aged 20 to 24, 62.3% choose candy or fruity flavours, with 20.9% selecting mint or menthol. This appeal of flavoured e-cigarettes contributes to nicotine addiction, which adversely affects mental and physical health, exacerbating conditions such as anxiety, depression, and stress¹⁰. The widespread use of flavours and their impact on youth highlight the urgent need for regulatory action.

The HKPRDHU recommends full support for the Government of Canada's proposed amendment to ban e-cigarette flavours. In addition to this amendment, we recommend also banning mint and menthol as they are the second most desired flavour¹. These measures will address the primary factor driving youth vaping and reduce the overall appeal of e-cigarettes. Implementing this ban will help prevent nicotine addiction and its associated health risks among youth and young adults.

⁹ World Health Organization. "Urgent action needed to protect children and prevent uptake of e-cigarettes." 2023. <https://www.who.int/news/item/14-12-2023-urgent-action-needed-to-protect-children-and-prevent-the-uptake-of-e-cigarettes>

¹⁰ Truth Initiative. "Mental Health and Nicotine Resources." 2023. <https://truthinitiative.org/mental-health-and-nicotine-resources>.