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Ottawa Public Health staff recommendations to Health Canada in response to their Consultation on *Potential Measures to Reduce the Impact of Vaping Products Advertising on Youth and Non-users of Tobacco Products*

On February 5, 2019, Health Canada released a consultation, which sought comments on proposed measures to limit the advertising of vaping products, entitled: *Potential measures to reduce the impact of vaping products advertising on youth and non-users of tobacco products*. The consultation, which will close on March 22, 2019, focuses on Health Canada's proposed limits on advertising of vaping products, including the places where advertisements can be placed; the content in advertisements; the display of vaping products in certain retail locations; and the inclusion of health warnings on vape products.

The proposed restrictions on advertising align with many current tobacco advertising restrictions. However, there are areas in which the restrictions could be strengthened to further protect Canadians, particularly youth and young adults, from the harmful effects of vaping products, as outlined below.

Recommendation 1: Restrict the placement of advertisements at points of sale, public places, broadcast media, and publications

Over the past 30 years, the Government of Canada has introduced a number of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorships restrictions that have positively impacted the health of Canadians by reducing tobacco consumption rates and smoking initiation among young people¹.

Health Canada's proposed regulatory measures recommend that vaping product advertisements not be permitted in the following instances:

- Point of sale: Prohibit vaping product advertisements at all points of sale where youth is allowed access, including online (with some exceptions)
- Public places: Prohibit all vaping product advertisements in all public places, where youth have access such as a shopping mall, public transit, billboards, etc.
- Broadcast Media: Prohibit all vaping product advertising on broadcast media within 30 minutes before and after children's and youth oriented programming.

- Publications: Prohibit all vaping product advertising in publications for children and youth, including online websites and social media platforms.

Currently, the advertising of vapour products can be seen online, in newspapers and magazines, stores, and on television. In-store advertising is shown to have the strongest association with youth's openness and curiosity to use vaping products.ⁱⁱ Internet and point-of-sale based advertising have been shown to be particularly impactful on youth's susceptibility and openness to vaping product use ⁱⁱⁱ. The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) reports exposure to the marketing and promotion of vaping products is high for Canadian youth and young adults, with 48% reporting exposure to such marketing on the internet.^{iv}

Comprehensive bans of tobacco advertising include direct advertising in all types of media (including broadcast, print and online), as well as in all forms of indirect advertising including promotion and sponsorship^v. Research shows that prohibiting advertisements and promotions removes sensory cues to purchase and use these products, and helps to de-normalize use^{vi}. As such, federal regulations that restrict children and youth exposure to marketing and advertising of vaping products can help reduce the normalization of youth vaping and the associated health impacts.

OPH supports the proposed measures to restrict vaping product advertisements at points of sale and public places where youth is allowed access, including on-line. However, evidence supports broader restrictions on broadcast media and publications, in alignment with current tobacco advertising and promotion regulations. Further restrictions to broadcast media and publications, could be applied, to align with current tobacco advertising restrictions, this would mean that advertising of vaping products would be completely prohibited on all domestic television, radio, newspaper, magazine, and outdoor advertising channels and there would be restrictions (with some exceptions, similar to those restrictions within the tobacco advertising regulations) to advertising vaping products in print media, the internet and through internet sales.

- **Based on current evidence, it is recommended that the Government of Canada include further restrictions to advertising and promotion of vaping products on broadcast media and publications, in alignment with tobacco advertising and promotion regulations on broadcast media and publications.**

Recommendation 2: Enhance health warnings

Health Canada has proposed measures to apply health warnings to all advertisements, in particular for products that contain nicotine. OPH staff support the proposed measures, as the Government of Canada is building upon the achievements of Canada's current tobacco labelling system by applying this approach to vaping products. Health information on tobacco products is recognized as a best practice to inform people about the health risks^{vii}. Further, youth who perceive vaping products to cause harm have significantly lower odds of being open to trying vaping products^{viii}.

- **In addition to adding health warnings, OPH staff recommends that, consistent with best practices, health warnings be required to be noticeable and engaging; include information about the addictive nature of nicotine and the hazards of ingesting liquid nicotine; and that cessation information (i.e. for a “quit line”) be included on vaping products.**

Recommendation 3: Plain and standardized packaging be applied to vaping products including vaping devices and liquid products

There is evidence to suggest that plain packaging reduces the attractiveness of tobacco products, restricts the use of the packaging as a form of advertising and promotion, limits misleading packaging and increases the effectiveness of health warnings^{ix}.

- **It is recommended that plain and standardized packaging be applied to vaping products including vaping devices and liquid products.**

Enhancing the health-related labeling measures and requiring further restrictions on advertising and promotion of vaping products are evidence-based strategies that would contribute to the Government of Canada's attainment of its commitment to reduce tobacco's harms to public health and help to achieve the government's goal of a rate of 5% of the population using tobacco by 2035.

ⁱSmoke-Free Ontario Scientific Advisory Committee, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Evidence to guide action: Comprehensive tobacco control in Ontario (2016). Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2017.

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/SFOSAC%202016_FullReport.pdf

ⁱⁱ Margolis, K. A., Donaldson, E. A., Portnoy, D. B., Robinson, J., Ne, L. J., & Jamal, A. (2018). E-cigarette openness, curiosity, harm perceptions and advertising exposure among U.S. middle and high school students. *Preventive Medicine*, 112(September 2017), 119–125

ⁱⁱⁱ Best, C., Haseen, F., Van Der Sluijs, W., Ozakinci, G., Currie, D., Eadie, D., ... Haw, S. (2016). Relationship between e-cigarette point of sale recall and e-cigarette use in secondary school children: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health* 16(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-2968-2>

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- ^{iv} Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (2018) Youth and Young Adult Vaping in Canada.
https://www.otru.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/recigwp_project_news_oct2018.pdf
- ^v World Health Organization (2018). WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: Global Progress Report 2018 (Annex 1: List of Key Indicators (153) deriving from the reporting instrument used in assessing the current status of implementation.)https://www.who.int/fctc/reporting/party_reports/who-fctc-annex-1-indicators-current-status-implementation.pdf
- ^{vi} Smoke-Free Ontario Scientific Advisory Committee, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Evidence to guide action: Comprehensive tobacco control in Ontario (2016). Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2017.
https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/SFOSAC%202016_FullReport.pdf.
- ^{vii} World Health Organization (2008). World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. (2008)
<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42811/9241591013.pdf;jsessionid=1B7414D9746DC07A5761E185EEB03596?sequence=1>
- ^{viii} Margolis, K. A., Donaldson, E. A., Portnoy, D. B., Robinson, J., Ne, L. J., & Jamal, A. (2018). E-cigarette openness, curiosity, harm perceptions and advertising exposure among U.S. middle and high school students. *Preventive Medicine*, 112(September 2017), 119–125
- ^{ix} Smoke-Free Ontario Scientific Advisory Committee, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Evidence to guide action: Comprehensive tobacco control in Ontario (2016). Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2017.
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