

## Health groups call on Federal government to deliver on its commitment to protect kids against nicotine addiction

**Montreal, February 19, 2024** – Leading health organizations concerned about the health and wellbeing of youth in Canada have united to publish a full-page ad today in *The Hill Times* to draw Ottawa lawmakers' attention to the urgent need to intervene to protect minors against nicotine addiction.

The ad is signed by Action on Smoking & Health, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Lung Association, the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control, Heart & Stroke and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada.

It highlights how flavours play a key role in attracting kids to nicotine products and **calls on the federal government to ban flavours in vaping products, including mint and menthol** (tobacco flavour would be allowed). Banning flavours has been on the government's agenda since the publication of [draft regulations](#) in June 2021, although no concrete action has materialized since then.

**FLAVOURS  
HOOK  
KIDS**

Flavoured vapes and nicotine pouches get kids hooked on nicotine. The tobacco and vaping industry knows this.

**Federal government: protect our kids from flavoured nicotine by:**

- 1. Banning vape flavours, including mint/menthol**
- 2. Making nicotine pouches a prescription-only product\***

\* For more information regarding this urgent matter, please see our joint news release: <https://bit.ly/48Kripl>

While the government's existing proposal would exempt mint/menthol, health groups [have argued](#) that a complete ban on non-tobacco flavours is required to protect young people from nicotine addiction, as mint/menthol is the [second-most popular flavour amongst youth and young adults](#). A comprehensive ban would be consistent with developments in a [growing number](#) of jurisdictions, including Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, five U.S. states (California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island, as well as D.C.) and six Canadian provinces and territories.

**The ad also calls for swift action to protect minors against the sale and promotion of nicotine pouches, namely by making them a prescription-only product.** Under the current federal rules, nicotine pouches authorized under the *Natural Health Products Regulation* can be legally sold to minors in convenience stores and promoted on television, billboards and social media, including by means of lifestyle advertising. In fact, it was Imperial Tobacco's [lifestyle promotion](#) in favour of their new "Zonnic" pouches that pushed health groups [to sound the alarm](#) last fall. Making nicotine pouches available on a prescription-only basis would give time to both federal and provincial governments to establish a proper regulatory framework. So far, only British Columbia and Quebec have taken steps to address this issue, by requiring consumers to go through a pharmacist to purchase these products.

### Quotes:

"Several additional options are available to the Health Minister, like temporarily suspending the sale of nicotine products, which would also allow federal, provincial and territorial authorities to strengthen relevant laws and regulations. For example, nicotine pouches could be subject to many of same provisions

regarding promotion that apply to tobacco and vaping products,” explains Cynthia Callard, Executive Director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada.

“Nicotine is a highly addictive drug, and there needs to be adequate controls before a nicotine product is allowed on the market,” says Sarah Butson, Senior Director, Public Affairs at the Canadian Lung Association. “Nicotine pouches are popular with youth in other countries – a trend not observed with other forms of smoking cessation products. We are concerned about a rise in popularity by Canadian youth and the resulting early exposure to nicotine.”

“Nicotine gum was initially only sold by prescription in Canada, and only later on was a non-prescription approach allowed,” says Manuel Arango, Director of Policy & Advocacy at Heart & Stroke. “Using that same precautionary approach for a new type of nicotine product is totally reasonable and could be done easily and quickly.”

“This is the first time in more than 100 years that it is legal for a nicotine product from a tobacco company to be sold to minors in Canada,” says Rob Cunningham, Senior Policy Analyst, Canadian Cancer Society. “Tobacco companies cannot be trusted. It is essential that the federal Health Minister take action on an urgent basis.”

“Imperial Tobacco can claim all it wants that its pouches are intended for adult smokers who want to quit, but unlike other manufacturers of nicotine replacement therapies (NRT), this company deliberately chose to distribute its product through convenience stores and promote them with lifestyle messaging and images of young adults,” explains Flory Doucas, Co-Director and Spokesperson of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control.

“The Minister said last Monday that we can expect an announcement regarding nicotine pouches ‘in the coming days’. We look forward to seeing what the Minister plans to do. We hope that the government will be consistent in protecting kids from nicotine addiction and will rapidly move to ban all flavours in vaping products. Time is of the essence when it comes to kids getting hooked on nicotine,” said Les Hagen, Executive Director of ASH Canada

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