

News Release

*Youth vaping in Canada*

## Tobacco Control Groups to Minister Saks: Ban Flavours Now or Resign

**Ottawa, October 4, 2024** – With the clock running out on this parliament, Canada’s major tobacco control agencies today condemned the continued delay of a national ban on flavours in vaping products. They called on **Addictions Minister Ya’ara Saks** to immediately finalize this important regulation or to step down so that someone else can complete this important task.

*Provinces are struggling under the lack of federal leadership*

*“For the past 14 months we have waited in vain for this Minister to take action to address the youth vaping crisis,”* said **Cynthia Callard, Executive Director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada**. *“But instead of reigning in the vaping industry, she has met with them. Instead of acting to protect youth, she has kept silent while tobacco and nicotine companies continue to lure youth with increasingly affordable, flavourful and playful devices.”*

Draft regulations to remove sweeteners and most flavourings from vaping products were first published in the [Canada Gazette in June 2021](#), but three years later have still not been finalized. Other regulatory plans by the department to regulate designs and packaging, to strengthen age-gating and to allow public access to data on the tobacco and vaping industry have been shelved.

Early in 2024, [the department signaled flavour restrictions would be completed before summer](#). Ultimately, however, the Minister failed to finalize them. In late May, she met [with vaping industry representatives](#) to hear their concerns about the risk of an illicit market. Following this meeting, departmental officials cited the illicit market as the reason for the delay.

*“The enforcement challenges that provinces like Quebec are facing with flavour restrictions are largely the result of the lack of federal controls which the industry is exploiting,”* explained **Flory Doucas, Co-Director and Spokesperson of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control**. *“With no federal ban on online and interprovincial sales, suppliers are able to ship to the 6 Canadian jurisdictions where these products are banned,”* for example.

*“The federal regulatory void is a key driver of the uncompliant products on the market that are eroding the benefits of the flavour restrictions in Quebec and other provinces. It is both ironic and offensive that this industry can use its own defiance of provincial regulations as an argument to block federal action. It’s even worse that the Minister seems to be buying this argument,”* added **Ms. Doucas**.

### *Industry interference*

*“If Addiction Minister Saks needs inspiration to better control this industry, she can look to her colleague, the Minister of Health,” said **Les Hagen, Executive Director of ASH Canada**. “Minister Holland stood up to the industry despite its malicious campaign against him. He moved quickly and decisively to curtail the *irresponsible and harmful marketing* of nicotine pouches. When it comes to taking action to protect Canadian youth, there is a stark contrast between these two Ministers.”*

Nicotine pouches are regulated under the *Food and Drugs Act*, which comes under the authority of the **Health Minister**. Vaping Products are regulated under the *Tobacco and Vaping Products Act* which comes under the authority of the **Minister of Addictions**.

*“Another important measure which has been further delayed during Minister Saks’ term as minister is the establishment of guidelines to prevent tobacco industry interference with health policy, as required under the global tobacco control treaty to which Canada is a party. Without these guardrails, industry interference will continue,” added **Mr. Hagen**.*

### *More young Canadians hooked on nicotine*

*“Continuing to allow sweeteners and flavourings is symptomatic of this government’s misguided approach to the vaping market,” said **Ms Callard**. “Their preference for ‘light touch’ regulations has allowed tobacco and vaping companies to find new ways to induce young people and other non-smokers to inhale nicotine as a first step to becoming addicted customers.”*

As evidence of the government’s failed policy for the vaping market, the groups pointed to the *increase in nicotine use among teenagers and young adults* which followed the federal policy change and which has reversed decades of progress against nicotine addiction. The latest *Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey* indicates that there were *240,100 more vapers* in 2022-23 than in 2021-22, and that 86% of these individuals (206,900) are never smokers. This means that on average, for every 40 former smokers that start vaping every day, there are 567 never smokers who take up vaping (206,900 divided by 365).

*“Minister Saks should acknowledge the urgency for her action and the consequences of her delay,” said **Ms. Doucas**. “We need a minister who is willing to stand up for Canadian kids, who is willing to stand up at cabinet and who is willing to stand up to the tobacco and nicotine industries.”*

*“The time has come for her to regulate or resign so that someone else can finally accomplish this important task. Canadian youth deserve better,” concluded **Ms. Doucas**.*

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