

Nicotine Pouches are not helping Canadian smokers quit – no matter what Big Tobacco and their allies say

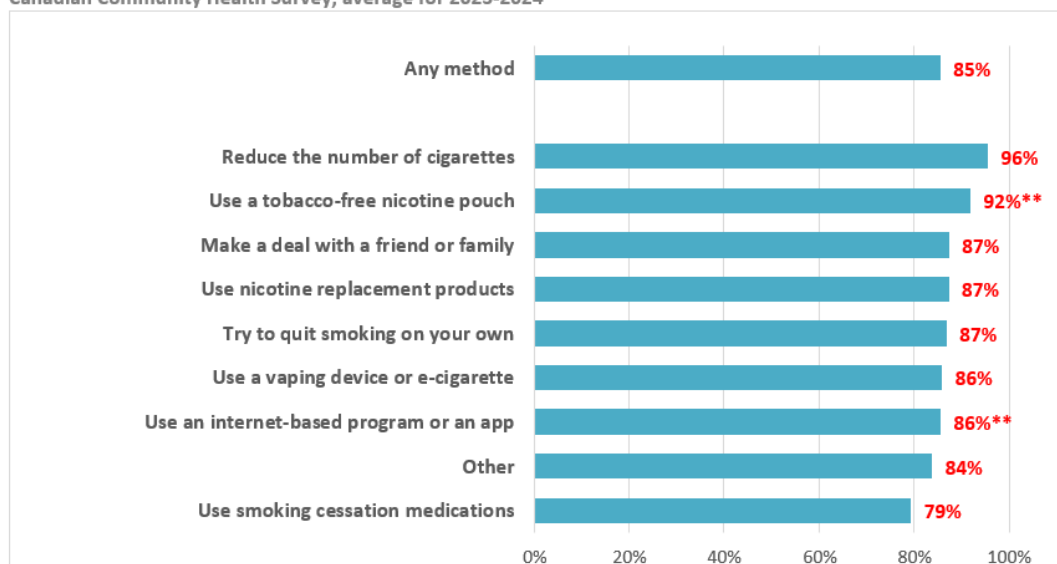
Montreal, Ottawa, Edmonton, December 3rd, 2025 – Concerned about intensified lobbying by the world’s largest tobacco companies to weaken restrictions on the sale of nicotine pouches, health groups are reminding the public and decision-makers that the Canadian experience with these products to date suggests stronger, not weaker, controls are required. These products are not helping smokers quit, but they are helping tobacco companies recruit new nicotine addicts, including thousands of youths.

“Few Canadian smokers are using pouches in their quit attempts, and those who do appear less likely to succeed than those going cold turkey or using conventional stop-smoking treatments,” says **Les Hagen, Executive Director of Action on Smoking & Health (ASH Canada)**.

This conclusion is based on the results of the **Canadian Community Health Survey**, the largest health survey conducted by **Statistics Canada**. The survey now includes [questions on the quit methods used by smokers](#), and asked about the use of nicotine pouches in 2024.

The [results published in the 2024 CCHS Data Dictionary](#) show that of the 2 million Canadian smokers who had tried to quit in the previous year, only 117,000 (6%) used pouches, and of these the number who reported successfully quitting smoking was too small (under 26 in the CCHS sample) to provide a reportable estimate.

Figure 2: Failure rate* of past-year quit attempts (respondent still smoking at time of interview)
Canadian Community Health Survey, average for 2023-2024



*Failure rate is the proportion of smokers who have made a quit attempt in the past 12 months who identified themselves as still smoking at the time of their interview.

** No recently quit former smokers were identified as having used tobacco-free nicotine pouches or internet programs or apps, indicating that the actual number of respondents who used these products was under 26.

Although the data provided does not allow for statistical comparison, the [estimated proportion of failed quit attempts among pouch users was the highest of any quit aid identified in this survey](#). Of the smokers participating in the survey who had tried to quit, almost all (92%) of those who used pouches had relapsed by the time they were surveyed. Nicotine pouches were legal for sale during that year, and were widely distributed in convenience stores outside **Quebec** and **British Columbia** until sales were [federally restricted to pharmacies in late August 2024](#).

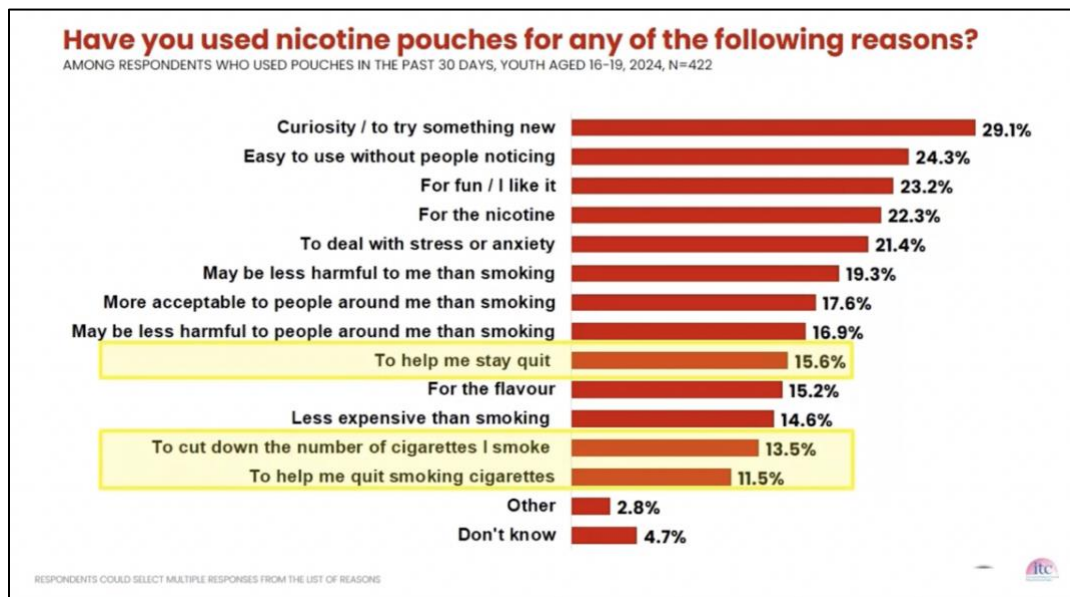
“The supposed benefits of nicotine pouches as cessation aids [are being exaggerated to pressure the federal government into weakening market restrictions](#),” says **Cynthia Callard, Executive Director of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada**.

Ineffective for smokers, but appealing for youth

“The survey results underscore how addictive nicotine is,” says **Ms. Callard**. *“No matter the method or product used, the vast majority (8 out of 10) of quit attempts fail. This should encourage Health Canada to prioritize preventing nicotine addiction by reducing the appeal and availability of nicotine for young people.”*

A [recent study](#) based on the **Compass** survey of **Quebec** high school students observed that “nicotine pouches appear to be gaining popularity among Canadian youth” and cautioned that they “have considerable potential to follow the same popularity trajectory as e-cigarettes.” Despite their limited availability on the **Quebec** market, students were almost as likely to report using pouches (2.6%) as cigarettes (3%) in the last 30 days.

Meanwhile, Canadian data from the **International Tobacco Control (ITC) Youth Tobacco and Vaping Survey** found that young people are mostly motivated to use nicotine pouches “for fun,” “out of curiosity” and for the drug effect. As a way to “quit smoking” was the least invoked reason.



Source: David Hammond, Canadian data from the 2024 International Tobacco Control (ITC) Youth Tobacco and Vaping Survey, “Shifting landscapes: Nicotine products, industry tactics, and emerging trends”, presentation, Nov. 6, Canadian Conference on Tobacco and Nicotine, 2025.

“The promotion of ineffective cessation tools now appears to be an integral part of the tobacco industry’s business plan, as it stands to profit both from smoking and the addiction of novel nicotine

products. Promoting nicotine pouches is no threat to their cigarette sale revenues, which remain *as high as ever*, while these products are gaining popularity among non-smokers, especially youth,” adds **Flory Doucas, Co-Director and Spokesperson of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control**.

Lobbying efforts to bring pouches back into convenience stores

Tobacco companies have used [full-page ads](#), [official](#) and [unofficial](#) petitions, [opinion pieces](#) and [legal challenges](#) in their sustained campaign to weaken the 2024 regulations. Led by Canada’s top two cigarette manufacturers, **Imperial Tobacco Canada (ITC)** and **Rothmans, Bensen & Hedges (RBH)**, lobbying efforts include front groups with undisclosed funding, such as [bringbackthepouches.ca](#) and [quitclub.com](#). (See [appendix here](#) for examples of pressure tactics.)

Indeed, **RBH’s “Unsmoke”** campaign has bombarded the Internet, especially news sites, with political advertising, exaggerating the role novel nicotine products such as pouches and e-cigarettes play in getting smokers to quit, eclipsing the impacts they have in addicting new generations of Canadians and the inherent risks they carry.

Members of Parliament siding with Big Tobacco?

“No one will be surprised by tobacco industry tactics to mislead the public and politicians about the health impacts of their products. But it’s alarming to learn that some Members of Parliament would believe Big Tobacco’s rhetoric regarding nicotine pouches and call for weaker controls on these addictive products”, adds **Les Hagen**.

A product endorsement [campaign](#) and several [petitions](#) were launched by Members of Parliament calling for nicotine pouch regulations to be struck down. *“At the very least, political support for the industry’s propaganda should stop and more should be done to protect kids. The current rules for nicotine pouches should be maintained, and regulatory efforts should be ramped up to reduce all forms of nicotine use by young people, namely youth vaping, a phenomenon that remains widespread due to [government inaction](#) on flavours and other marketing practices,”* concludes **Ms. Doucas**.

[Several other countries](#) have banned nicotine pouches, recognizing that youth uptake and their minimal cessation potential outweigh the population benefits of their legalization. Fortunately, despite their continued availability in Canada, the federal rules appear to limit consumption among youth compared to jurisdictions with weaker restrictions.

Link to compilation of industry examples of pressure tactics here:

https://cqct.qc.ca/Communiqués_docs/2025/PRSS_25_12_03_Appendix_ProPouchPressureTactics.pdf

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Action on Smoking & Health (ASH Canada) Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada

APPENDIX – EXAMPLES OF PRESSURE TACTICS:

Imperial Tobacco :



Rothmans, Bensen & Hedges — Unsmoke: (numerous full page ads)

IT'S TIME TO MODERNIZE NICOTINE POLICY.
INSIGHTS FROM CANADA'S FORMER CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER

With over two decades in public health, I've seen how science-informed policy can drive better health outcomes. The same approach is urgently needed in Canada's approach to reducing cigarette use.

Alternatives like heated tobacco, vaping products, and oral smokeless products don't burn tobacco or produce smoke. While not risk-free, the growing body of scientific evidence shows they have the potential to be substantially less harmful than continued smoking.

Despite this, Canadian smokers are denied access to critical information and products. Nicotine pouches remain unavailable in convenience stores, and current laws restrict communication about the relative risk of smoke-free alternatives.

Countries like Sweden have shown the power of harm reduction. Their balanced, evidence-based policies have helped cut smoking rates to under six per cent. Canada must follow suit.

Let's align regulation with science, expand access to smoke-free options, and provide Canadians with the information they need to make better decisions.

THE EVIDENCE IS HERE. THE TOOLS EXIST. PUBLIC HEALTH DEFENDS ON IT.

PASCAL MICHEL, Sr Manager, Scientific Engagement, Rothmans, Bensen & Hedges and former Chief Science Officer of the Public Health Agency of Canada

Learn more at UNSMOKE.ca

- NOT ALL NICOTINE PRODUCTS CARRY THE SAME RISK**
Combustion is the primary cause of smoking-related diseases.
- IT'S TIME TO ALIGN TOBACCO REGULATION WITH SCIENCE:**
 - Differentiate regulation based on actual product risk
 - Amend the Tobacco and Vaping Products Act and stop denying smokers access to the vital health information on smoke-free alternatives.
 - Provide adult smokers better access to alternatives by putting nicotine pouches back in convenience stores.

The London Free Press
How do we achieve a smoke-free Canada, faster?
By Rory McDonald
Published Mar 23, 2024
Last updated Mar 23, 2024
3 minute read

You can help change Canada.
www.unsmoke.ca

This article is sponsored by Unsmoke Canada, an initiative of Rothmans, Bensen and Hedges

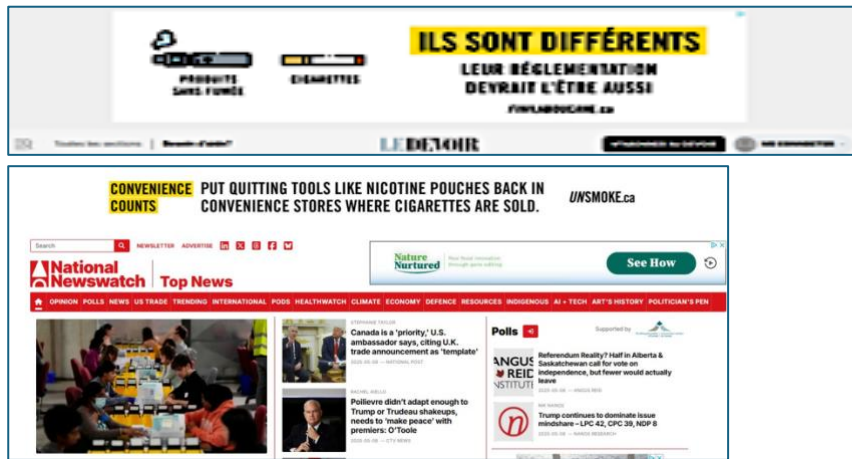
Despite decades of government programs and regulations, today, nearly five million Canadian adults continue to smoke.

UnSmoke CA
UNSMOKE CANADA

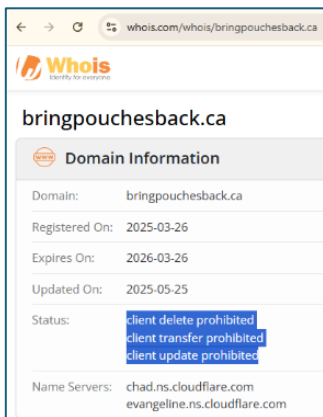
If you don't smoke, don't start. If you smoke, quit. If you don't quit, change.
Canada @unsmoke.ca | Joined May 2015
Following 490 followers

IT'S NOT ONE OR THE OTHER
PROTECTING YOUTH AND INFORMING ADULT SMOKERS TO HANG-99-9900

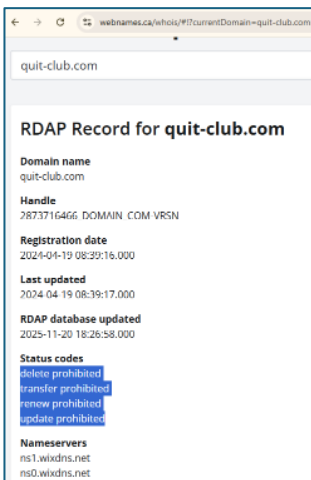
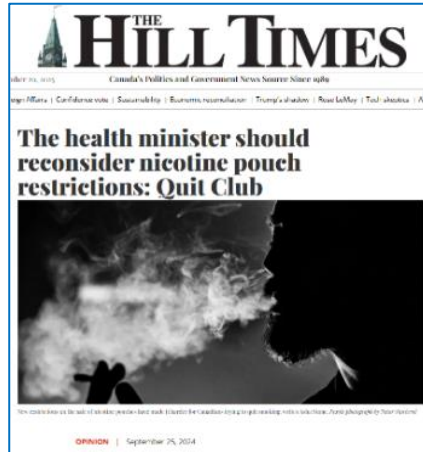
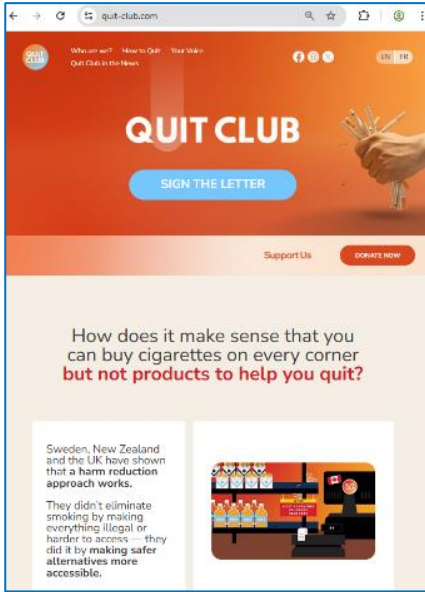
- Youth should not have access to any nicotine-containing products
- Non-smokers should not start using any nicotine-containing products
- Current smokers should quit
- If they don't quit, they should switch to a smoke-free alternative



ringpouchesback.ca: (owner/funders undisclosed)



Quit club: (owner/funders unknown; the only X account promoting QuitClub is bringbackpouch.ca)



Consumer Choice Center: ([affiliate](#) of its American parent entity which is funded by the tobacco industry; Sun columnist [Jay Goldberg](#) acts as its “Canadian Affairs Manager”):


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Sabine Benoit: Ottawa's nicotine policy is failing smokers

Instead of embracing harm reduction tools like nicotine pouches, officials have made them even harder to get

By Sabine Benoit, Special to National Post
Published Sep 17, 2025
Last updated Oct 06, 2025
3 minute read
15 Comments



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Columnists

GOLDBERG: Carney should adopt Conservatives' position on nicotine pouches

Jay Goldberg
Published Sep 25, 2025 · Last updated Sep 25, 2025 · 3 minute read
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mus nicotine pouch product on concrete background. PHOTO BY ANDRII ATANOV /Getty Images/Stockphoto

Prime Minister Mark Carney found a lot of success in the last election by adopting Conservative positions on the consumer carbon tax and the Justin Trudeau government's planned capital gains tax increase, among others.

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CIGARETTE CESSATION: Mark Carney should embrace Conservative idea to help cut smoking

Postmedia News
Published Sep 22, 2025 · 1 minute read
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No Smoking Warning Symbol Set

WATCH: Sun columnist Jay Goldberg on how Conservatives want nicotine pouches to be once again sold in convenience stores in Canada as a form of harm reduction when


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Canada / Opinion / Columnists

GOLDBERG: Health Canada twists itself into pretzels to defy common sense

Health Canada is standing foursquare behind former health minister Mark Holland's ministerial order to keep nicotine pouches out of convenience stores.

Jay Goldberg
Published Nov 04, 2025 · Last updated Nov 04, 2025 · 3 minute read
20 Comments



Federal Minister of Health Mark Holland speaks to reporters following the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Health Ministers' Meeting in Halifax on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025. PHOTO BY GABRIEN CALABRESE /THE CANADIAN PRESS