

**Public health leaders call for  
a national nicotine use reduction target  
to accompany the tobacco use reduction target,**

urge Federal Health Minister to  
immediately protect youth against nicotine vaping

**World No Tobacco Day, May 31, 2026**

**Ottawa, May 30, 2026** – Over 20 key health organizations and tobacco control experts from across the country convened in Ottawa this weekend for a national roundtable on the future of tobacco control in Canada. Concerned with high rates of youth vaping and the increasing use of nicotine pouches, the roundtable participants released a [consensus statement](#) calling for a new national target of reducing nicotine use to less than 5% by 2045. The existing target of less than 5% tobacco use by 2035 was reaffirmed.

The national target to reduce the overall tobacco use rate to less than 5% by 2035 was initially set at a national summit held at **Queen’s University** in 2016 and formally adopted by **Health Canada** in 2018.

“The good news is that Canada is making solid progress towards the ambitious target of reducing tobacco use to less than 5% by 2035”, said **Dr. Michael Chaiton, Director of Research for the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit**. “Overall tobacco use has decreased substantially since the turn of the century. Canada has over five million fewer people who use tobacco today than if usage rates remained at 2000 levels. This reduction represents a colossal public health achievement. However, with 13% of Canadian adults still using tobacco and higher rates in vulnerable populations, governments need to do more to meet or exceed the less-than-5-by-35 target.”

“The bad news is that a new generation of young people is becoming addicted to nicotine through aggressive marketing of e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches,” said **Rob Cunningham, Senior Policy Analyst, Canadian Cancer Society**. “As a result of these new product categories, overall nicotine use is no longer declining in Canada. A new distinct national target is needed to reduce the prevalence of nicotine use to less than 5% by 2045.”

“Vaping is not harmless—especially for young people and non-tobacco users”, said **Dr. Hassan Mir, Cardiologist and Scientist at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute**. “Tobacco and vaping products both contain nicotine, which is one of the most addictive drugs in existence. Several published systematic reviews have revealed that young people who vape nicotine are much more likely to start smoking. The precautionary principle should always apply when keeping youth tobacco- and nicotine-free.”

Roundtable participants also called for improved collaboration among the federal, provincial and territorial governments in pursuing national tobacco and nicotine reduction targets. Federal, provincial and territorial governments should be engaged to urgently advance a

comprehensive series of initiatives to reduce tobacco use to less than 5% by 2035, and nicotine use to less than 5% by 2045.

“Provincial and territorial governments are key players and must be actively engaged in a national tobacco and nicotine reduction strategy,” said **Les Hagen, Executive Director, Action on Smoking & Health (ASH Canada)**. “These governments are paying for the healthcare costs resulting from tobacco and nicotine use. A more collaborative national strategy with unified national targets is needed. The federal government needs to work more closely with provinces and territories to achieve success. A strong Canada is a tobacco- and nicotine-free Canada.”

Participants in the roundtable discussed bold new policy measures required to meet or exceed the tobacco and nicotine targets.

“Canada’s success in reducing tobacco use has resulted from several ambitious evidence-based policy measures since 2000”, said **Flory Doucas, Co-Director of the Quebec Coalition for Tobacco Control**. “These policies include tobacco tax increases, large graphic health warnings, tobacco flavour bans, plain packaging, promotion restrictions including retail display bans, and workplace and public smoking bans. We need to build upon these policies and apply them to recreational nicotine products to the greatest possible extent. The most urgent order of business is to finalize a national regulation restricting flavours in vaping products. We are calling for immediate action by Minister of Health Marjorie Michel on this critical policy measure.”

The roundtable was held May 29-30 in advance of [World No Tobacco Day](#), organized every May 31 by the World Health Organization, with this year’s theme entitled “Unmask the appeal – countering tobacco and nicotine addiction”.

Tobacco use is the leading avoidable cause of disease, disability and death in Canada, claiming 46,000 lives annually. Nicotine is highly addictive. Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, emphysema, and many other diseases and health conditions. The overwhelming proportion of new users are youth and young adults.

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