

## Law amendments submission, Bill 233

Good day Mr. Chair and members of the Law Amendments Committee.

My name is Dr. Gary Ernest. I'm a family physician of more than 30 years and I'm here today as President of Doctors Nova Scotia.

Doctors Nova Scotia is strongly in support of Bill 233 introduced by Minister Delorey, which proposes amendments to the Smoke-free Places Act and the Tobacco Access Act.

We applaud the government's efforts to protect Nova Scotians, particularly youth, by further strengthening legislation following the ban of flavoured e-cigarettes and juices in December of 2019.

As a physician, whether I've been working in my office practice, in the emergency department or in the community, I've seen first-hand the negative effects that tobacco and related products have had on the health of our citizens. I fear for the future of our youth, as far too many are embracing vaping.

The tobacco industry continues to produce products that will addict people and expose them to harmful chemicals, including tobacco-less products. It's important that our province enact the appropriate safeguards to protect youth from the harmful effects of tobacco and nicotine-related products.

Capping the level of nicotine in products is vital to protecting young Nova Scotians from unwittingly ingesting extremely high levels of nicotine via vaping products and becoming addicted to nicotine as a result.

Government must be nimble and be given the authority to control tobacco-less products, which contain nicotine. Tobacco companies will look for various ways to sell and market their products, and government must be able to meet them head-on.

A strong message that emphasizes the dangers of vaping would be supported by giving peace officers the authority to confiscate and dispose of e-cigarettes when found on underage youth. This will help officers enforce the law with regards to a ban on minors possessing vaping products. And further, peace officers must be given jurisdiction so that vendors and their employees are required to provide information and reasonable assistance in investigating a potential breach of the act.

Outdoor spaces where people work and frequent must remain smoke-free. To help with this, we support clarifying language so that businesses cannot unfairly 'de-license' parts of their patios to create a smoking area.

Our province has made extensive headway in the fight against smoking and tobacco use. The arrival of e-cigarettes and vaping has created an opportunity for tobacco companies to market their products to more people, particularly youth, and we're losing hard-won ground. And who suffers? Our patients, young and old, as they are afflicted with the effects of lung disease...a preventable set of illnesses that burden our health-care system.

Today, I implore you to make the right decision and support Bill 233.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee. I am now happy to take your questions.

Sincerely,

Gary Ernest, MD, CCFP, FCFP, MBA  
President