

Thank you, honourable members of the committee to allow me to speak today. I am a registered nurse and the founding member Vaping Advocacy and Education Project, better known as VAEP. We are health professionals who produce free learning materials that are easy to understand and based in the scientific evidence. I incorporated this federal not-for-profit 4 years ago and have reviewed hundreds of published articles on tobacco harm reduction.

I have travelled here from Alberta because the intentions to ban flavours and tax eliquid will unintentionally cause far more harm than good. Nova Scotians exceed the national smoking rate of 15% by 3 percentage points. Alarmingly, 1 in 4 males smoke in this province; this is 9% higher than the national smoking prevalence for males.

Smoking causes 85% of lung cancer and 87% of COPD. It is responsible for 36% of lung diseases, 29% of cancers, 14% of heart diseases. It is notable that nonprofits in lung, cancer and heart diseases are the leading proponents in anti-tobacco harm reduction campaigns.

Nicotine does not cause diseases; it is the constituents found in the 7000 chemicals in tobacco smoke that cause diseases. Nicotine is so safe that anyone, including youth, can purchase nicotine gum, patches and inhalers. from drug store shelves.

The current and historical data on vaping repeatedly confirms that vaping is a fraction the risk of smoking; for instance, vaping is less than 1% the cancer risk compared to smoking. The number of adult vapers continues to grow despite the millions of dollars the authorities and health related non-profits have put into fear-based, incomplete narratives that scare smokers away from harm reduction.

As per the youth I have interviewed and further supported by the credible evidence, youth are predominantly using closed pod devices, such as JUUL. These closed pod devices are preferred by youth because they are very small which makes them easy to conceal; they are inexpensive; they can be obtained at stores that are not age restricted; and they have a scant amount of vapor that allows them to use without detection. Most closed pod brand have less than 6 flavours.

In surveys where youth are asked their MAIN reason for trying vaping and they could only choose ONE answer, only 14% selected flavours; while 52% selected: "Just to give it a try". Youth try adult taboos as this is normal human development such as 41% have drank alcohol in the last year.

Alcohol comes in a variety of flavors, again, being flavor diversity driven by adult demand. So, why then are we not seeing a call for the ban of flavored alcohol to curb underage drinking? Youth drink alcohol for reasons such as social acceptance, experimenting with adult behaviors, or sensation seeking.

Vaping is the preferred method of smoking cessation in Canada because it delivers nicotine through inhalation and uniquely mimics the ritualistic smoking behaviour. The vaping industry has been 100% consumer driven and tailor designed by smokers. Approximately 700,000 adult vapers in Canada have demanded the production of the 1000's of flavours and tobacco flavours comprise just a minute portion. Adults predominately use the widely diversified refillable tank devices. These devices use lower nicotine concentration eliquids and produce much larger volumes of vapour than the closed pod devices.

If flavours are banned, vapers will be discouraged from continuing with harm reduction and smokers will be discouraged from switching to harm reduction because the essential element of satisfaction to their taste preferences will be eliminated from what is the most effective nicotine replacement therapy.

As to the proposed tax of \$0.50 per milliliter of eliquid, this tax will make harm reduction as expensive as smoking and smokers will lose another yet incentive to switch. Further, this will shut down the local mom and pop vape shops which supply the smoker with the essential one-to-one service required to guide the smoker to find the right devices and eliquids. These small businesses have helped thousands of Nova Scotian smokers quit smoking where the health community has failed and this specialized service may never be replicated again.

All that will be left will be the closed pod devices that youth like so much and who are predominantly owned by tobacco companies. Tobacco harm reduction will be handed over to tobacco companies.

Smokers face a certain future of smoking-related diseases, years of suffering and very difficult deaths. Desperate smokers seeking to address their nicotine addiction with a vastly safer delivery system will have to turn to the black market which will not be bound to the federal safety regulations.

In closing, the \$322 million in smoking-related tax expenditure this province pays every year will continue and probably rise without a harm reduction alternative. If we transition smokers to harm reduction, that expense disappears.

Thank you for your attention.

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