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NS Legislature Law Amendments Committee
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March 6, 2020

Members of the Law Amendments Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute support from the Health Promotion within the Mental Health & Addictions Program at the IWK Health Centre in the matter of Bill 243, the Financial Measures (2020) Act.

As shared yesterday at Law Amendments Committee regarding Bill 233, IWK's Mental Health and Addictions program is vested in reducing risk factors from as well as improving protective factors for children and youth regarding harms from substance use – including tobacco and nicotine—and mental health problems. We believe that taxation of vaping products will reduce the accessibility of these items to Nova Scotian youth.

Science shows that nicotine exposure to the developing brain can cause harms including development of substance use disorders, concentration problems and other challenges later in life.¹ Because of this, it is imperative that our leaders support healthy public policy that reduces youth access to nicotine. An example of supportive legislation would treat vaping products as tobacco products, so that they are regulated the same. Essentially, vapes and combustible tobacco are both nicotine delivery methods with ownership and control over the most popular formats for youth residing with the tobacco industry. There is precedent for this. In 2016, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration enacted a rule equating vaping devices and electronic cigarettes (and other unproven nicotine delivery devices) with other combustible tobacco products in the effort to reduce harms from nicotine addiction for youth.²

Many substance industries are acutely aware that youth are sensitive to the price of their products, and so we anticipate you will hear arguments from their side as well. However, we ask you to not discount a range of scientific studies that show youth are more impacted by the price of tobacco than adults, such that a price increase would result in a reduction in use^{3,4} Newer evidence even strengthens this association and validates the effect in the context of electronic cigarettes.⁵

National tobacco use data indicate that the *cigarette* smoking rate for Nova Scotian youth aged 15-19 was over 30% in 1999. However, years later and after comprehensive regulatory measures—such as restricting point of sale displays, removing tobacco from pharmacies and into standalone tobacconists at grocery stores, and importantly increased taxation—the 2017 youth smoking rate reduced by a third the



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1999 level – to 9.7%.⁶ Cancer Care Nova Scotia indicated in 2000 that “price elasticity studies show that every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes will reduce smoking among Nova Scotia teenagers by 7%.”⁷

In summary, we must learn from our historical successes in tobacco control and apply the same methodology when approaching the youth vaping epidemic. It is important to increase taxation on vaping products to ensure they are getting the same treatment that tobacco products get in Nova Scotia. Bill 243 begins this important task. We fully support the measure to increase taxes on vaping products to protect the youth of our province.

I would be happy to respond to any questions that the committee may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

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¹ Goriounova NA, Mansvelter HD. Short- and long-term consequences of nicotine exposure during adolescence for prefrontal cortex neuronal network function. *Cold Spring Harb Perspect Med.* 2012;2(12):a012120. Published 2012 Dec 1. doi:10.1101/cshperspect.a012120

² US Food & Drug Administration. (2016). The Facts on the FDA’s New Tobacco Rule. Retrieved March 5 2020 from <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/facts-fdas-new-tobacco-rule>

³ Chaloupka, F. (1999). Macro-social influences: The effects of prices and tobacco-control policies on the demand for tobacco products. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, Volume 1, Issue Suppl_1, 1999, Pages S105–S109. Retrieved March 5 2020 from <https://doi.org/10.1080/14622299050011681>.

⁴ Ross, H. & Chaloupka, F. (2003). The effect of cigarette prices on youth smoking. *Health Econ.* 2003 Mar;12(3):217-30. Retrieved March 5, 2020 from <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.709>

⁵ Pesko, Hunag, Johnson & Chaloupka. (2018). E-cigarette Price Sensitivity Among Middle and High School Students: Evidence from Monitoring the Future. *Addiction*. May ; 113(5): 896–906. Retrieved March 5 2020 from <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14119>

⁶ University of Waterloo. (2019). Tobacco Use in Canada. Retrieved March 5 2020 from <https://uwaterloo.ca/tobacco-use-canada/adult-tobacco-use/smoking-provinces/nova-scotia>

⁷ GPIAtlantic. (2000). The Cost of Tobacco in Nova Scotia. Retrieved March 5 2020 from <http://www.gpiatlantic.org/pdf/health/tobacco/costoftobacco-ns.pdf>