

Board of Health Briefing Report

To: Chair and Members of the Board of Health
Date: September 6, 2023
Topic: **Ontario Vape Tax**
Submitted by: Dr. Glenn Corneil, Acting Medical Officer of Health/CEO
Prepared by: Laurel Beardmore, Walter Humeniuk, Amanda Mongeon
Reviewed by: Erin Cowan

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) Board of Health:

Endorse the Alliance for a Tobacco-Free Ontario (ATFO) policy recommendation that the Government of Ontario participate in the federal government's vape tax framework to deter access to vape products among young people **AND FURTHER THAT**, a copy of this endorsement be forwarded to the Alliance for a Tobacco-Free Ontario (see Appendix A).

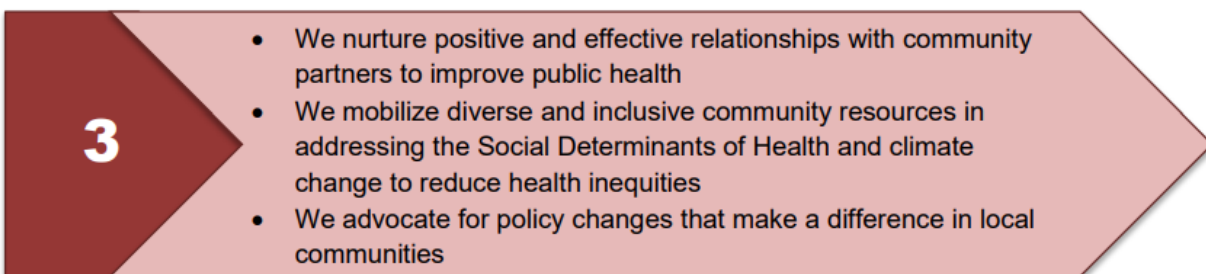
Overview

- In Northern Ontario, 30.6% of students in grades 7-12 engage in vaping compared to 22.7% in Ontario.¹
- Nicotine is a highly addictive substance that can adversely affect adolescents' ability to learn, remember, and maintain attention.²
- E-cigarette use is associated with an increased risk of nicotine addiction.³
- E-cigarette smokers may be at an increased risk of developing some of the same conditions as tobacco smokers, such as chronic lung disease.⁴
- Taxation is an effective strategy to curb nicotine use.⁵

Ontario Public Health Standards (2018) and THU Strategic Plan 2019-2023 Links

This work directly contributes to meeting requirements and expected outcomes in the Ontario Public Health Standards (2021) and supports the following THU 2019-2023 strategic direction 3.

We collaborate with partners to make a difference in our communities



3

- We nurture positive and effective relationships with community partners to improve public health
- We mobilize diverse and inclusive community resources in addressing the Social Determinants of Health and climate change to reduce health inequities
- We advocate for policy changes that make a difference in local communities

Background

Smoking rates among Ontario youth continue to be at an all-time low, while at the same time, numerous sources concur that vaping rates among youth remain high.⁶ In Northern Ontario, 30.6% of students in grades 7-12 engage in vaping compared to 22.7% of Ontario.¹

With smoking rates low and youth using e-cigarettes at an increased risk of smoking, initiatives need to address vaping in youth to ensure smoking rates continue to decrease or remain low and prevent a new generation from becoming addicted to nicotine through vaping. The decrease in cigarette smoking and the increase in youth vaping reflects a shift in nicotine product use among youth and not a reduction in nicotine initiation.⁷

Nicotine is highly addictive and can lead to dependence among young people.³ Nicotine can alter teen brain development, affect memory and concentration, reduce impulse control, and may cause cognitive and behavioural problems in adolescence.² Health risks are also associated with harmful chemicals in vaping products.⁴ Although some substances, such as vegetable glycerine, flavouring, and propylene glycol, have been deemed safe by food manufacturers, the long-term effects of inhaling these products are unknown. Heating vaping liquids can also create new chemicals, such as formaldehyde, which are dangerous.⁸ While some research suggests that vaping may be less harmful than smoking, less harmful does not mean safe, especially for non-smokers. Most young vapers have never smoked cigarettes, yet most use nicotine in their vaping devices, which can create a dependency on nicotine and may lead to smoking in the future.⁹

The World Health Organization has deemed taxation the most effective measure for fighting tobacco use. Price increases through taxation usually result in the most significant health benefit for people with the least money to spend, including young people. The effects of price increases on young people are potent deterrents, reducing tobacco consumption at a rate 2-3 times higher than among adults.⁵

The Alliance for a Tobacco-Free Ontario is seeking organizations to endorse their policy recommendation for the “Government of Ontario to participate in the federal government’s vape tax framework, to deter access to vape products among young people”. They are gathering signatures of supportive organizations, and this list of supportive organizations will be shared with the Government of Ontario.

Additional information about taxation as a strategy to address youth vaping is included in Appendix B.

Related Work

THU staff work to promote awareness of the health impacts of tobacco and nicotine use, to support healthy public policy and supportive environments, and to limit the impact of accessibility at the local level. A made-in-Timiskaming comprehensive vaping campaign targeted to youth, parents, and educators is planned for implementation in September 2023 to prevent vape use and promote cessation. This proposed policy action is part of a comprehensive health promotion approach to addressing youth vaping.

Historical Timiskaming Board of Health work related to youth nicotine and vaping prevention includes:

Motion 3S-2018 July 11, 2018: Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017

That the BOH for Timiskaming send a letter to the Ontario Minister of Health expressing concern regarding the delay of implementing the Smoke-Free Ontario Act 2017

Motion 33R-2-18 June 26, 2018: Tobacco and Smoke-Free Campuses

That the Timiskaming Board of Health support the call from Public Health Sudbury and Districts to urge local post-secondary institutions to enhance existing policies to achieve 100% tobacco and smoke-free campuses

Motion 38R-2017 June 15, 2017: Tobacco Taxes and Contraband

That the Board of Health supports the call from Algoma Public Health that municipalities reject motions from tobacco industry and/or its front groups and to call on the Ontario government to (a) raise tobacco excise taxes and (b) enhance enforcement activities designed to reduce the presence of contraband tobacco in Ontario communities.

Resolution 02-2014 November 5, 2014: Regulating the Manufacture, Sale, Promotion, Display and Use of E-Cigarettes

That the Timiskaming Health Unit supports Toronto Public Health recommendations that federal and provincial government subject electronic cigarettes (with or without nicotine) to the following:

- i. prohibit e-cigarette use wherever smoking is prohibited through the Smoke-Free Ontario Act;*
- ii. prohibit sales of flavoured e-cigarette products as has been proposed for tobacco products;*
- iii. prohibit e-cigarette sales to minors (people under age 19);*
- iv. E-cigarettes should be subject to restrictions on marketing, promotion, retail displays, and advertising;*
- v. E-cigarette devices, cartridges and liquids should be subjected to strict consumer safety standards including ensuring manufacturing consistency, regulating the maximum quantity/dosage of nicotine they contain, stipulating labelling and reporting requirements and requiring that e-liquid is sold in child-proof bottles; and*
- vi. research on the long-term health effects of e-cigarettes and exposure to second hand vapour.*

References

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3. Lin, C., Gaiha, S. M., & Halpern-Felsher, B. (2022). Nicotine Dependence from Different E-Cigarette Devices and Combustible Cigarettes among US Adolescent and Young Adult Users. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(10), 5846. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19105846>
4. Marques, P., Piqueras, L. & Sanz, M.J. (2021). An updated overview of *e-cigarette* impact on human health. *Respiratory Research*, 22, 151 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12931-021-01737-5>
5. Chaloupka, F.J., Yurekli, A., & Fong, G.T. (2012). Tobacco taxes as a tobacco control strategy. *BMJ Journals*, 21(2), 172-180. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2011-050417>
6. Roterman, M. & Gilmour, H. (2022). Correlates of vaping among adolescents in Canada. Ottawa ON: Statistics Canada. <https://doi.org/10.25318/82-003-x202200700003-eng>
7. Sun, R., Mendez, D., & Warner, K. E. (2021). Trends in Nicotine Product Use Among US Adolescents, 1999-2020. *JAMA network open*, 4(8), e2118788. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.18788>
8. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division; Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice; Committee on the Review of the Health Effects of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems; Eaton DL, Kwan LY, Stratton K, editors. Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2018 Jan 23. 5, Toxicology of E-Cigarette Constituents. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK507184/>
9. Sanchez, S., Kaufman, P., Pelletier, H., Baskerville, B., Feng, P., O'Connor, S., Schwartz, R., & Chaiton, M. (2021). Is vaping cessation like smoking cessation? A qualitative study exploring the responses of youth and young adults who vape e-cigarettes. *Addictive behaviors*, 113, 106687. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2020.106687>

Supporters of an Ontario Vape Tax

The **Alliance for a Tobacco Free Ontario (ATFO)** is comprised of the Canadian Cancer Society, Heart & Stroke, the Canadian Lung Association, the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit, and the Lung Health Foundation. ATFO is committed to creating a province free of commercial tobacco and youth vaping. Our members work independently and collaboratively to reduce tobacco and vape use in Ontario.

Youth vaping remains a highly problematic public health issue. Rates skyrocketed in the late 2010s and despite a small decline in youth vaping rates during the pandemic, vaping among young people in Ontario has increased again. Most Ontario youth have indicated it's easy to get access to vapes, partly because the cost of entry to purchase a vape is very low. In Ontario, some products sell for as low as \$5. Youth are very sensitive to price, and research has shown that taxes on vape products deter consumption through both reducing initiation and improving quit rates.

ATFO is currently seeking organizations to endorse our policy recommendation for the **"Government of Ontario to participate in the federal government's vape tax framework, to deter access to vape products among young people."**

We kindly ask that your organization endorse this policy recommendation. A list of supportive organizations will be shared with the Government of Ontario.

Please complete this form and return to Hillary Buchan-Terrell, Advocacy Manager (Ontario) for the Canadian Cancer Society at hillary.buchan-terrell@cancer.ca by end of day September 6, 2023, with the subject line "We support a vape tax in Ontario".

Organization name:	
Name of Authorized Signatory:	
Date:	

For more details about the vape tax, please see the Heart & Stroke backgrounder entitled *Protecting the Health of Ontario Youth: Addressing Vape Use Through Price*.



Canadian
Cancer
Society

OMA Ontario Medical Association

BREATH E
the lung association



Heart&Stroke
Cœur+AVC



THE ONTARIO
TOBACCO
RESEARCH
UNIT

UNITÉ
DE RECHERCHE
SUR LE TABAC
DE L'ONTARIO

lung
health
starts
now

lung health
foundation



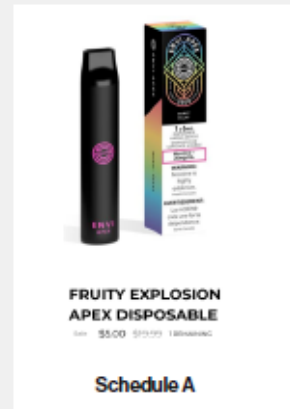
Protecting the Health of Ontario Youth: Addressing Vape Use Through Price

Youth vaping is a crisis. Today in Ontario, there is a new generation of young people **addicted to nicotine** and regularly inhaling toxic chemicals from vape products. Almost half of young adults (ages 20-24) and 29% of youth (ages 15-19) have tried vaping.¹ Many who try go on to become regular vapers.² In addition to impacting brain development,³ vaping is linked to increased risk for respiratory^{4,5} and cardiovascular issues.^{6,7}

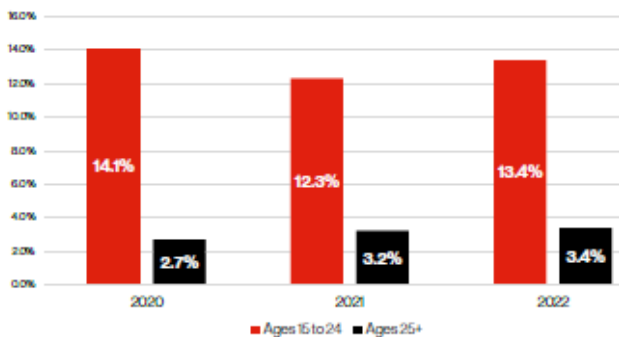
We urge the Ontario government address youth vaping with the implementation of a tax on vaping e-liquids using the new federal excise duty framework.

Youth and Young Adults Drive Vape Market in Ontario

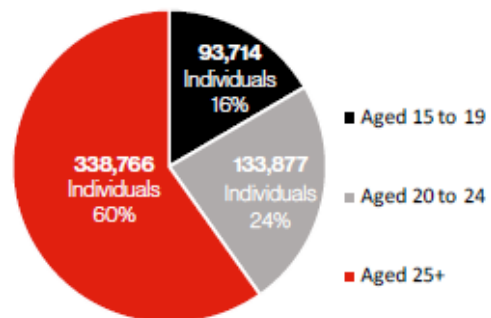
- Over the past decade, **youth vaping has become a crisis**. We have the highest youth vaping rates in the world.⁸ Rates have remained high and at present 13.4% of young people (15 – 24 years of age) in Ontario report use⁹
- Vaping is almost **four times more common among young people** than adults and this threatens to undermine the decades of progress in tobacco control and addition achieved to date.⁹
- As demonstrated in the graph below, in 2022, 40% of Ontario vapers are those under the age of 25⁹ – most of whom vape for reasons other than tobacco cessation (curiosity, enjoyment, stress relief).¹ This recreational use puts young people at risk for a lifelong harmful addiction.³
- A 2020-21 study of youth and young adult current vapers in Canada found that **average age of initiation in Ontario is 15.78 years old**.¹⁰ Young vapers spend between \$13 and \$20 weekly on vaping.¹⁰ Vape products are sold in Ontario for as little as \$5 demonstrating easy access for price sensitive young people. (Schedule A)



Rates of Current Vaping in Ontario⁵



Ontario Current Vapers, 2022⁵



Health Impacts on Youth

- Nicotine **alters adolescent brain development** and can affect memory and concentration.³
- Vaping has been **linked to poor mental health outcomes** including worsening symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as higher odds of depression.¹¹
- Vaping liquid and aerosol **contain a number of chemicals** with known toxicity.¹²
- E-liquid can **negatively impact cells** in the mouth, nose, lungs, heart, and blood vessels.^{4, 6, 13}
- Emerging evidence suggests dual use (the most common pattern of use in Canada) of both vapes and cigarettes is **linked to higher risk of disease** (stroke and heart attack).^{14, 15}
- Emerging evidence indicates that there is potential for vaping to be a **gateway to tobacco,^{16, 17} and cannabis use.¹⁸**
- A research review found that teenagers who used e-cigarettes have **four times higher odds of future tobacco use.¹⁹**

Low Costs and High Stakes Make a Vape Tax Worthwhile

A wealth of evidence from tobacco policy indicates that **youth are particularly sensitive to price,²⁰** and new research around vape taxation reports similar findings which indicates that price mechanisms have an important role in discouraging the use of vaping products by young people.^{21, 22} **A vape tax in Ontario would decrease youth vaping, and lower the health impacts for adolescents during a critical time in their brain development.**

We recognize that there are limitations on the ability of the Government of Ontario to implement new taxes. However, the federal government committed to implementing an excise tax on vaping liquid starting in 2022, which includes a mechanism for 'federal-provincial-territorial taxation coordination.' If Ontario chose to align with this coordinated approach, the tax would be imposed and administered by the federal government and the limitations on the provincial government would not apply.

We recommend that the Ontario government coordinate with the federal government and match the excise per ml tax on vaping e-liquids.

The Rationale for a Tax on Vape Products



An annual revenue of approximately \$49.4 million could be generated in Ontario through this vape tax framework.²³



82% of people in Ontario support the provincial government adopting a tax on vape products, according to a 2023 poll.²⁴



All provinces except Ontario and Manitoba have adopted or announced a vape tax as a means to deter consumption.



8.2% reduction in e-cigarette sales was associated with a 10% increase in e-cigarette price in Europe.²² In the US, same increase associated with **up to 45% reduction in demand** among university students.²¹



Over 50 jurisdictions around the world have adopted a vape tax as a way to signal health harm and addiction and also reduce vape use.