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REGULATING VAPING PRODUCTS: A BALANCING ACT

Imperial Tobacco Canada reaffirms its commitment to support Health Canada in addressing youth vaping while continuing to offer adult consumers an alternative to smoking

Montreal, Quebec, May 30, 2019 – In advance of World No Tobacco Day (May 31), Jorge Araya, President of Imperial Tobacco Canada, reiterated the company’s commitment to offering potentially reduced-risk products to adult consumers and to finding solutions to the problem of youth vaping, which includes launching a new educational campaign for retailers.

“Our position is very clear. Just as we believe that youth should not smoke, we agree that youth should not vape. Despite our own youth prevention efforts and Health Canada’s recent education campaign, youth vaping is still occurring, and it must be addressed before it becomes as significant a problem as youth alcohol or cannabis consumption¹,” said Araya.

The challenge with youth vaping is access. To properly address youth vaping, it is important to understand how and where Canadian youth are getting their products and to ensure that the laws already in place are enforced.

“We work closely with our retail partners to ensure they uphold the minimum age laws. We ensure our on-line sales are age verified both when the order is placed and at the time of delivery,” committed Araya. “And while we are confident that the vast majority of youth do not obtain these products directly through convenience retail locations², today we launched a new campaign in retail stores to further educate retailers and remind consumers that vaping products are not to be sold to youth.”

The company firmly believes that potentially reduced-risk products play an important role in achieving the federal government’s objective of reducing the smoking rate to five percent by 2035. In order for these products to achieve their full potential, it will require the federal and provincial governments to implement the right regulatory framework that allows and supports the appropriate communication about the benefits of vaping products to adult smokers.

“Despite the evolving attitudes towards vaping, it remains a controversial subject with serious hurdles to overcome. The most pressing is striking the right regulatory balance that ensures that youth do not have access to vaping products, and adult smokers have the necessary information if they want to switch,” said Araya.

Globally, acceptance of vaping as a reduced risk alternative to smoking is gaining traction and, importantly, it is backed by a growing body of scientific evidence that shows their harm reduction potential compared to traditional cigarettes.

Health Canada has acknowledged that vaping is a less harmful alternative to cigarettes. In the UK, Public Health England (the equivalent of Health Canada) estimates that vaping products are at least 95% less harmful than traditional cigarettes, and as a result of their progressive policies over 1.7 million smokers have quit smoking.

"If we continue to put our combined efforts behind addressing youth vaping and implementing the right regulatory framework, we have a real opportunity to make a difference for society, governments, our company, and most importantly, adult smokers," concluded Araya.

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¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-student-tobacco-alcohol-drugs-survey/2016-2017-summary.html>

² For example, a recent mystery shopper exercise by Ontario's Attorney General and Ministry of Health found convenience stores had a 96.2% success rate on sales of age-restricted products.