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FACTS NEEDED TO ADDRESS VAPING CONCERNS

A CANADIAN REGULATORY APPROACH TO VAPING SHOULD PRIORITIZE FACTS, DATA AND SCIENCE;
NOT U.S – STYLE PROHIBITION

Montréal, Québec, September 19, 2019 – Imperial Tobacco Canada calls on Health Canada and provincial health authorities to use the recent events in the United States and one possible similar case in Canada as a catalyst to find a balanced regulatory approach to vaping products that provides adult consumers information they need to make an informed decision, enforces restrictions on sales to minors and imposes robust and consistent product standards.

The company’s renewed call for government action comes on the heels of the USA Food and Drug Administration’s statement (September 6, 2019) in response to recent reports of respiratory illnesses following the use of vaping products, and now a possible case in Canada, along with President Donald Trump’s announcement (September 11, 2019) of a possible ban on flavoured vaping products and demands for similar action in Canada by public health lobby groups.

Two separate and distinct issues – youth access and product safety – are being lumped together but have the same basic solution: enforcement of existing restrictions on sales to youth and prohibitions on flavours appealing to youth, and implementation and enforcement of regulations to ensure consumers have access to vapour products that have met the most rigorous quality assurance standards and testing of the same.

PRODUCT SAFETY, QUALITY STANDARDS ARE ESSENTIAL

“The reported cases of acute respiratory illness highlight the importance of effective regulation and enforcement to ensure product safety,” said Eric Gagnon, Head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs, Imperial Tobacco Canada. “We believe in balanced, reasonable regulations that offers adult smokers and vapers the confidence that the product they are using meets safety standards, is tamper resistant and is tested in accordance to consumer protection norms.”

The FDA indicated that these events appear to be a new phenomenon linked to liquids that were not sourced from reputable manufacturers and which contained ingredients, including THC and Vitamin E Acetate, which is not used in the vaping products distributed by Imperial Tobacco Canada and manufactured by its parent company British American Tobacco.

None of BAT’s products sold in Canada or anywhere else in the world have been linked to the acute illnesses in the U.S., nor do our products contain THC or Vitamin E acetate, both of which media reports suggest are factors in the U.S. cases.

“We take our consumer safety responsibilities very seriously. The vaping products we distribute benefit from robust, industry-led testing standards to ensure quality and safety in the way they are developed and manufactured. Every single ingredient and component in these products have been scrutinized by a team of toxicologists for its suitability for vaping,” stated Gagnon.

PROHIBITION VS. FACT-BASED REGULATION

Separate from the above, concerns about youth use of vapour products have led some U.S. authorities to consider or impose bans on flavoured vapour products. However, it is important to note that in Canada, Federal vapour product legislation already prohibits flavours that could be appealing to youth and those law should be strictly enforced.

“We have always been clear that children should not use vapour products and we have had stringent measures in place to address this issue for some time. At the same time it is hard to overestimate the role that the responsible marketing of flavours plays in helping adult consumers move on from combustible products to alternative tobacco and nicotine products.” said Mr. Gagnon

A major concern with proposals to ban all flavoured vapour products is that it would drive consumers to the illicit market and exacerbate the problems being witnessed in the U.S. around product standards.

“Prohibition doesn’t work,” said Mr. Gagnon, citing the line used by Prime Minister Trudeau to justify legalization of cannabis. “We’ve seen how easy it is for an illicit market to take hold with cigarettes. The U.S. approach of banning all flavours will only fuel an illegal channel that is unregulated, untested, uncontrolled and ripe for products to flood the market.”

A Canadian approach should ensure that vapour products sold here are tamper-resistant, which means that users cannot add their own cocktail of liquid. They also allow for more control on the battery and heating systems used to deliver nicotine.

VAPING AND TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION

Imperial Tobacco Canada 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.

“Our concerns revolve around two things: keeping vaping products out of the hands of minors and giving adult smokers a potentially reduced-risk alternative to smoking that they will actually use,” said Mr. Gagnon. “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, enforce current age-restriction laws, as well as implement consistent product standards across the spectrum of vaping products.”

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For more information or interview requests, please contact:

Samiha Fariha
Torchia Communications
O: 416-341-9929 ext. 224
C: 647-268-6687
samiha@torchiacom.com

Kat Wnek
Torchia Communications
O: 514-288-8290 X 234
C: 514-677-9635
kat@torchiacom.com