

Manitoba's Bill 54 targets compliant retailers while missing how youth access vaping products

Imperial Tobacco Canada calls for enforcement-focused approach that protects youth while preserving access for adult smokers

Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 28, 2026 — Imperial Tobacco Canada shares the Manitoba government's objective of preventing youth from accessing vaping products. No young person should vape, and any retailer or online seller that provides nicotine products to minors should face serious consequences.

But Bill 54, as proposed, is focusing on the wrong part of the problem.

The legislation would prohibit urban convenience stores and other businesses open to youth from selling flavoured vapour products, while allowing rural convenience stores to continue selling those products. That creates an inconsistent framework that may look effective on paper but does not address how youth actually obtain these products. Even the Manitoba Lung Association has pointed out that youth are accessing vaping products through social sources and online channels.

"Manitoba is right to want stronger youth protection, but Bill 54 misses the mark," said Eric Gagnon, Vice President, Corporate and Regulatory Affairs, Imperial Tobacco Canada. "When youth access is happening through friends, online sellers and non-compliant retailers, removing products from the most compliant retail channels is not evidence-based policy. It is a policy that looks good on paper but misses how the market works in real life."

National data also shows youth vaping is actually decreasing, which reinforces the need for targeted, evidence-based enforcement rather than broad measures that punish compliant retailers. Health Canada's own compliance data shows the gap clearly. The latest federal compliance information shows less than 1% of convenience stores were found non-compliant during inspections, compared with 43% of specialty vape shops.

"Policies that target law-abiding retailers while leaving online and illicit channels under-enforced will not protect youth," added Gagnon. "They will push more consumers toward unregulated products, weaken responsible retail oversight and make enforcement harder."

Imperial believes Manitoba should adopt a more practical, evidence-based approach that includes:

- stronger enforcement for online sellers and specialty vape shops
- more inspections and meaningful penalties for those who sell to minors
- consistent rules across all urban and rural communities
- continued access for adult smokers seeking alternatives to cigarettes
- clear action against illicit and mislabelled products.

Health Canada acknowledges that adult smokers may use vaping products as a “less harmful option” to cigarettes. Any regulatory framework should protect youth while ensuring adults continue to have access to regulated products through responsible, age-verified retail channels.

“Good policy has to work in the real world,” said Gagnon. “Bill 54 should be strengthened so that it focuses on the channels where youth access is actually happening, not punish the retailers with the strongest compliance records.”

About Imperial Tobacco Canada

Imperial Tobacco Canada is the leading tobacco and nicotine company in Canada, part of the global BAT group. Our mission at BAT is to [create A Better Tomorrow™](#) by promoting a Smokeless World. We envision a future where smokeless products replace cigarettes, encouraging smokers to make a Switch to Better.

Imperial is committed to advancing THR through transparency, innovation, and collaboration. One such initiative is Omni™, a platform developed by our parent company BAT, to support education and stakeholder engagement around THR. [Omni™](#) serves as a dynamic resource for those working toward a smoke-free future.

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For more information or interview requests, please contact:

Mary Moniz
Torchia Communications
647-278-0152
mary@torchiacom.com