

**For Immediate Release
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BC Regulations an Attack on Convenience Stores

Convenience stores say regulations won't address youth access to vaping but will instead hinder ability of adult smokers to transition away from cigarettes.

TORONTO, ONTARIO (Nov 14, 2019) – Convenience store retailers are expressing their extreme disappointment at regulations introduced today by the Government of British Columbia that impose draconian measures on the sale of limited flavoured vape products through the convenience store channel.

“Youth access to vaping products is a serious issue, which is why our industry has committed to working with governments across the country to implement measures that will actually address it,” said Anne Kothawala, President and CEO of the Convenience Industry Council of Canada. “What’s even more shocking is that we have not found a partner in the Government of British Columbia or in Minister Dix who have repeatedly rejected our requests to meet on this extremely important issue,” said Kothawala, who represents the 2,500 convenience retailers that employ more than 21,000 British Columbians and collect more than \$200 million in taxes in the province.

“Convenience stores have an excellent track record of selling age restricted products to adult consumers. In fact, Government of Canada data shows that almost 90% of youth who vape, or have tried vaping, are getting these products from “social sources” (i.e. older siblings, family members, etc.), online purchases, and grey-market retailers that are not subject to the same regulations and enforcement oversight as convenience stores,” continued Kothawala. “If sales are to be restricted to adult-only environments, then vape shops will need to have somebody positioned at the door to ask for ID, like nightclubs do, to ensure that they truly are an adult-only environment” noted Kothawala.

“In the current highly politicized environment, governments appear to be losing sight of a key public policy objective: to transition adult smokers to reduced risk products. The B.C government’s own Health Officer supports responsible access to legal vape products for adults who want to quit smoking. Why would government restrict the sale of vape in the place that adult smokers currently go to buy cigarettes?” asked Kothawala.

Kothawala continued, “Convenience stores are not the source of the youth vaping problem and such drastic restrictions in our ability to sell these products to the adults coming into our stores looking for alternatives to traditional tobacco products will not be the solution to it either. We are also very concerned about the impact on the black market which is likely to grow and is the cause of many of the reported illnesses to date.”

Anne Kothawala concluded by saying, “there are ways to address the youth vaping crisis, unfortunately today’s announced regulations will fail to do that. What this will do, is limit responsible retailers’ ability to offer our adult smoking customers a limited choice of flavours. Our sales data supports that they use the non-tobacco flavours we sell to transition away from burned tobacco.”

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