

A smoke-free Ontario is just a pipe dream without access to safer alternatives

TORONTO, Nov. 25, 2017 /CNW/ - Protesters from across Ontario gathered at Queen's Park today in an effort to get Schedule 3 removed from Bill 174 - Cannabis, Smoke-Free Ontario and Road Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017. Schedule 3 incorrectly associates vaping with tobacco use, prohibiting safety demonstrations and promotion of the products in specialty shops to people over the legal smoking age. It also bans all flavours, prohibits use in public spaces and provides unconstitutional search and seizure powers to tobacco enforcement officers.

"The Government of Ontario has an outstanding opportunity to dramatically reduce the horrendous health toll caused by cigarette smoking by facilitating rather than trying to prevent the switch to massively less hazardous alternatives," said **David Sweanor, Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Centre for Health Law, Policy & Ethics at the University of Ottawa, and a longstanding global leader in smoking reduction.** "Yet we are seeing an effort to ram through a measure that will protect the cigarette business at huge costs to public health and civil liberties."

Vapor Advocates of Ontario spokesman Maria Papaioannoy-Duic, said if this bill is passed as-is, Ontario will be left behind the rest of the world on offering a safer alternative to smokers.

"Bill 174, schedule 3, will collapse Ontario's vaping industry, forcing thousands out of work and thousands more back to cigarettes. What exactly were the Liberals smoking when they wrote Schedule 3?" she said.

By legislating vaping products like tobacco, they are sending a message to the hundreds of thousands of smokers in this province that vaping is the same as smoking. If Health Minister Eric Hoskins and his team took the time to understand the technology and did the research that has seen tobacco use in other countries reach record lows, this legislation would not be written like prohibition that will undoubtedly wipe out the vape industry in Ontario.

"MPP Randy Hillier wasn't wrong when he called the Liberals criminal for these actions," Papaioannoy-Duic said.

This legislation dismisses Health Canada's stand on vaping, she said, and is dismissing the research including the Royal College of Physicians' study that showed vaping is 95 per cent less harmful than smoking.

"Health Canada identifies smoking as the cause of over 100 deaths every day in Canada," she said, adding that the Ontario government is attempting to sneak through this piece of legislation with an omnibus bill that doesn't allow for the full-scale debate and consultation it deserves.

The Wynne government is violating the constitutional rights of Ontarians who use vaping as a smoking cessation strategy as well as shop owners who wish to promote and educate their customers on the safe use of vape-related products.

By arbitrarily force-fitting vapor with combustibles like tobacco, the Liberals are stigmatizing a proven harm-reduction strategy for people looking to quit smoking.

It is estimated that there are over 1,000 vape-related businesses in this province that are relied upon by more than 900,000 Ontarians currently using vapour technology as their choice to abstain from deadly cigarettes.

SOURCE Vapors Advocates of Ontario

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