

Canadians who Vape Need to be Heard.

December 23rd 2019, Toronto, Ontario: Over the last few months we have been inundated with media stories stating that flavours are not essential when it comes to adult smokers. Shockingly, this has been done without actually talking to those who have quit smoking by vaping. The movement organization called Vapor Advocates of Ontario (VAO) has been adamant about standing up against that narrative.

In 2019, VAO, with the support of the entire independent vaping industry, initiated a personalized postcard campaign to ensure that the Minister of Health and Health Canada understood how vital flavours are to Canadians who vape. Vapers gave personal testimonials about the role of flavors in empowering them to quit smoking.

Last week Health Canada published their report ["What We Heard: Reducing Youth Access and Appeal of Vaping Products: Consultation Summary."](#)

According to this report, just under 23 thousand postcards were received by the Ministry. None of the postcard submissions were supportive of further flavour restrictions. Health Canada made the decision not to include responses from Canadians who vape in their analysis of the summary results of the consultation. Had they included the postcard responses, the percentage of support for further restrictions on flavours would have been 0.7%, not the 66% support they state in their release. The reality is, over 98% of responses were opposed to further restrictions. Canadians with lived experiences spoke up in the thousands and Health Canada paid more attention to an orchestrated moral panic at odds with the basic tenets of good public health practice instead of listening to the very people they are supposed to work for.

"Good public health measures require us to give voice to and learn from those with lived experience" said David Sweanor, longstanding anti-smoking advocate and Chair of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Health Law, Policy and Ethics at the University of Ottawa. "We have been subjected to blatant fear-mongering fed by biased media coverage, and if we don't start paying attention to the science and those who have gotten off lethal cigarettes via vaping we will have a public health disaster and a extraordinary violation of consumer rights while handing a big victory to cigarette companies."

There were months of blatant bullying of elected and Health Canada officials by anti-vaping groups, few if any of which have ever bothered to talk to the Canadians who actually vape. These groups claimed that adults don't need or want flavours. Yet the report acknowledges that tens of thousands of Canadians provided personal testimonials that vape flavours are important to adults.

"The importance of vaping, and specifically flavours, for Canadian adults abstaining from tobacco use has been minimized and ignored by the anti-vaping groups for whom 'nothing about us without us' seems a novel public health concept." State Maria

Papaioannoy-Duic, VAO Spokesperson "It is irresponsible for those who call themselves health professionals to ignore the importance that vaping has for those looking to stop smoking. Merely stating that adults don't use flavours, while ignoring the tremendous evidence supporting the contrary is irresponsible and poor public health practice."

Its time that we listen to the needs of smokers who chose vaping

Vapor Advocates of Ontario is a movement that started in 2015 in response to over reaching provincial regulations that would have seen tens of thousands of Canadians return to smoking. In the last 4 years, the group has been a vocal supporter of fair regulations around vaping and will continue to voice concerns.

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