

PRESS RELEASE

Flavoured tobacco products continue to be popular among high school students in Quebec: “The government can no longer delay a ban on flavoured tobacco products”

Montreal, September 10, 2014 – The Coalition québécoise pour le contrôle du tabac (CQCT) and the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) – Quebec Division regret the results of the **Propel Centre for Population Health Impact, University of Waterloo** [most recent survey](#) which confirms the continued popularity of flavoured tobacco products among Quebec youth, a phenomenon that the **federal government** tried in vain to regulate in 2009, but to which the **Quebec government** has still not reacted.

New data from 2012-2013 indicate that the majority (58%) of Quebec youth (from the final year of primary school to Secondary 5) who used tobacco products in the previous 30 days had used flavoured products. This percentage is the highest of all Canadian provinces, the national average being 49%.

The smoking rate has traditionally been calculated from cigarette consumption. But when we take into account other tobacco products – including those that are most often flavoured – there is a considerable increase in the rate. So, while 12% of Secondary 3 to 5 students in Quebec admit to cigarette-smoking; the rate is actually 20% if we take into account cigars, chicha, and smoke-free tobacco. There was no significant statistical variation for all these rates compared with the previous year¹.

“Facilitating the use of a product that can cause death by adding flavours to it is not to be taken lightly. Flavours minimize the perception of the harmfulness of tobacco and make the first few puffs more pleasant, thereby encouraging its use. It’s a sly trap that works: in fact, more than half of all tobacco products that Quebec youth use are flavoured. When we consider that each smoker in Quebec who quits or dies is replaced by a fresh young smoker, it is clear that the government cannot delay a ban on flavoured tobacco products,” says **Suzanne Dubois, Executive Director of the CCS – Quebec Division**.

Inertia in Quebec

Ever since cigarillos have been on the market from the mid-2000s, their popularity has been systematically the highest in Quebec. Flavoured cigars have even reversed the falling trend of smoking rates after ten years of progressive decline, beating even the popularity of cigarettes from 2006ⁱⁱ. *“Now, despite the recognition of this serious problem by all the political parties in Quebec and the general support in favour of legislative measures to curb flavoured products, Quebec still hasn’t taken any concrete step to prevent this unacceptable practice that continues to trap our youth into a vicious addiction to tobacco products,”* says **Dr Geneviève Bois, CQCT spokesperson**.

The **Tobacco Act** should have been amended in 2010, that is, five years after the last amendment in 2005. In other words, for nine years now, the industry has had a free rein to invent new marketing strategies, including

the introduction of attractive and popular flavoured products targeting youth, and get around the law to recruit a new generation of smokers.

But other provinces are taking action...

Alberta has passed a law banning flavoured tobacco although it is yet to be proclaimedⁱⁱⁱ. Recently, the **Nova Scotia**^{iv} Health Minister also indicated his intention to introduce a similar legislation. A bill banning flavours was tabled in **Ontario** before the last elections^v, and there is nothing to suggest that the same government, which now has a majority, will not go forward on the legislation. **Manitoba** too has introduced a bill on this subject^{vi}.

Long-awaited amendment

For the next amendment of the law, the **CQCT** and the **CCS** demand a ban on all flavoured tobacco products in addition to other substantial reforms such as standardized plain packaging. *“When the Tobacco Act was passed in 1998, as well as when it was strengthened in 2005, then Ministers Jean Rochon and Philippe Couillard each introduced ambitious measures, sometimes creating worldwide precedents, and above all, proportionate to the damage caused by tobacco. We hope to be able to count on the Minister Delegate of Rehabilitation, Youth Protection, and Public Health, Lucie Charlebois, to introduce measures that are as bold and strong during her term”* says **Dr Bois**.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - [2012-2013 DATA](#):

- **58% of Quebec high school students who have used tobacco in the previous 30 days say that they used a flavoured tobacco product** (it's the highest percentage in the country, the Canadian average being 49%)
- **12% of all Secondary 3 to 5 students in Quebec say they smoked in the previous 30 days, but 20% say they used a tobacco product** (cigarettes, cigars, chicha...)
- **12% of all Secondary 3 to 5 students in Quebec have used a flavoured tobacco product during the previous 30 days**
- **30% of high school students who smoked during the previous 30 days used menthol cigarettes** (see more details on the effect on menthol at <http://bit.ly/1xmT1o3>)
- **In Quebec, there was no significant statistical variation** in all these rates between 2010-11^{vii} and 2012-13

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ⁱ http://cgct.qc.ca/Documents_docs/DOCU_2013/TABAC_AROMATISES_ETJ_20131007.pdf

ⁱⁱ CQCT, « Indicateurs du taux de tabagisme au Québec », page 3,

http://www.cgct.qc.ca/Documents_docs/DOCU_2013/DOCU_13_10_17_Statistiques_PrevalenceQC.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Bill+banning+flavoured+tobacco+passes+third+reading/9216288/story.html>

^{iv} “Liberals target flavoured tobacco”, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, March 20, 2014. <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1194846-liberals-target-flavoured-tobacco>

^v http://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2013/11/13/ontario_bill_to_ban_sale_of_flavouredtobacco_to_youth.html

^{vi} <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/bill-banning-sale-of-flavoured-tobacco-to-kids-panned-261780291.html>

^{vii} http://cgct.qc.ca/Documents_docs/DOCU_2013/TABAC_AROMATISES_ETJ_20131007.pdf