



Physicians *for a* Smoke-Free Canada

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February 19, 2007

The Honourable Tony Clement

Minister of Health

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario

K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

I am writing today to share with you the disturbing findings of our analysis of the recent Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey regarding cigarillo use among young Canadians. This much-valued survey instrument has recently been improved to capture measurements of cigarillo use so for the first time we are able to see clearly how much this problem has grown.

From our analysis (attached), it is clear to us that cigarillos are a “starter product” for nicotine addiction, and are being used to recruit youth to smoking. We found:

- Canadian teenagers are more likely to experiment with cigarillos than they are cigarettes and Canadian boys are as likely to have recently used cigarillos as cigarettes,
- One quarter of those who reported having recently used cigarillos are under 19 years of age.

Traditional measures of smoking prevalence focus only on cigarette use but, as this analysis shows, this leads to a substantial underestimate of youth smoking.

Including cigarillo use, smoking among Canadian teenagers is now 20%, not 15% as otherwise reported.

A decade ago, decisions were made in your department to exempt cigars and cigarillos from many regulations covering cigarettes. As a result cigarillos can be sold in single sticks or kiddy packs, and they are sold with less visible health warnings. Decisions similarly reached to not put any restrictions on additives or flavourings have allowed tobacco companies to develop, package and price a deadly product with high youth appeal.

I include a sampling of the many types of cigarillos recently introduced to the Canadian market.

I hope you will agree that urgent action is needed to end this type of marketing, and would urge you to consider equally stringent regulations on all forms of tobacco including at a minimum requirements for standard/generic packaging, minimum package size, a ban on all flavourings, and a closing of any regulatory exemptions for cigars.

Tobacco control, like other forms of consumer product safety, has suffered from a framework which restricts government's ability for a 'rapid response' and does not empower government to immediately order unsafe products off the shelf. We trust that during the review of consumer product safety, you will consider the need to similarly strengthen the management of tobacco products.

Atul Kapur, MD, FRCPC, FACEP
President

Attachments:

Prime Time Cigarillos

Fact Sheet: Cigarillo Smoking in Canada, 2007

Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada submission to the "Food and Consumer Product Safety Action Plan" consultation.