

campaign for a **smoke-free** alberta

- News Release -

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Health Groups Call for a Ban on all Tobacco Product Flavourings

EDMONTON - The Campaign for a Smoke-free Alberta is urging the federal and provincial governments to ban the use of all flavour additives in tobacco products.

The call coincides with the release of new data by Alberta Health Services showing that provincial sales of small flavoured cigars—known as cigarillos—have skyrocketed from 5.7 million units in 2001 to over 64 million in 2007. Youth and young adults under the age of 25 are the heaviest users of cigarillos.

The tobacco industry has been adding flavours like menthol, cherry, berry, banana split, peach, chocolate and vanilla to their products to attract new smokers.

“The strategy to use flavours attract more tobacco users is clearly working”, says Angeline Webb of the Canadian Cancer Society. “Alberta sales of cigarillos have skyrocketed by over 1,000 percent since 2001. Alberta’s youth smoking rates are already higher than the national average and 80% of cigarillo users are under the age of 25”.

Cigarillos are particularly appealing because they are packaged in bright wrapping resembling innocuous consumer products such as candy, lip gloss and children’s markers. Because cigarillos are wrapped in tobacco leaves and not paper, they are not categorized as cigarettes or subject to health warning and other packaging regulations that apply to cigarettes.

“Industry documents reveal that flavour additives are used to make tobacco products palatable, to mask the harshness of tobacco and to make it easier for young people to become addicted to tobacco use” according to Dr. Charl Els, Alberta chairman of Physicians for Smoke-free Canada. “Some of the flavour additives, which are generally regarded as safe food products, such as cocoa, become carcinogenic when ignited, thereby increasing the toxicity of already lethal products”.

The Government of Ontario has banned the use of flavourings in cigarillos, and requires they be sold in packages of 20 units. The bill includes regulatory authority to ban flavours from other tobacco products.

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The strategy to use flavour additives to entice young people into a deadly addiction is one of many reasons that the tobacco industry needs to be held accountable for health care costs caused by the use of its products.

The Alberta Government has introduced new legislation titled the Crown's Right of Recovery Act that will enable cost-recovery litigation against tobacco companies for negligence resulting in increased Medicare costs.

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The Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta is a coalition of prominent health organizations that are working together to reduce tobacco use in Alberta. Visit our website www.smokefreealberta.com